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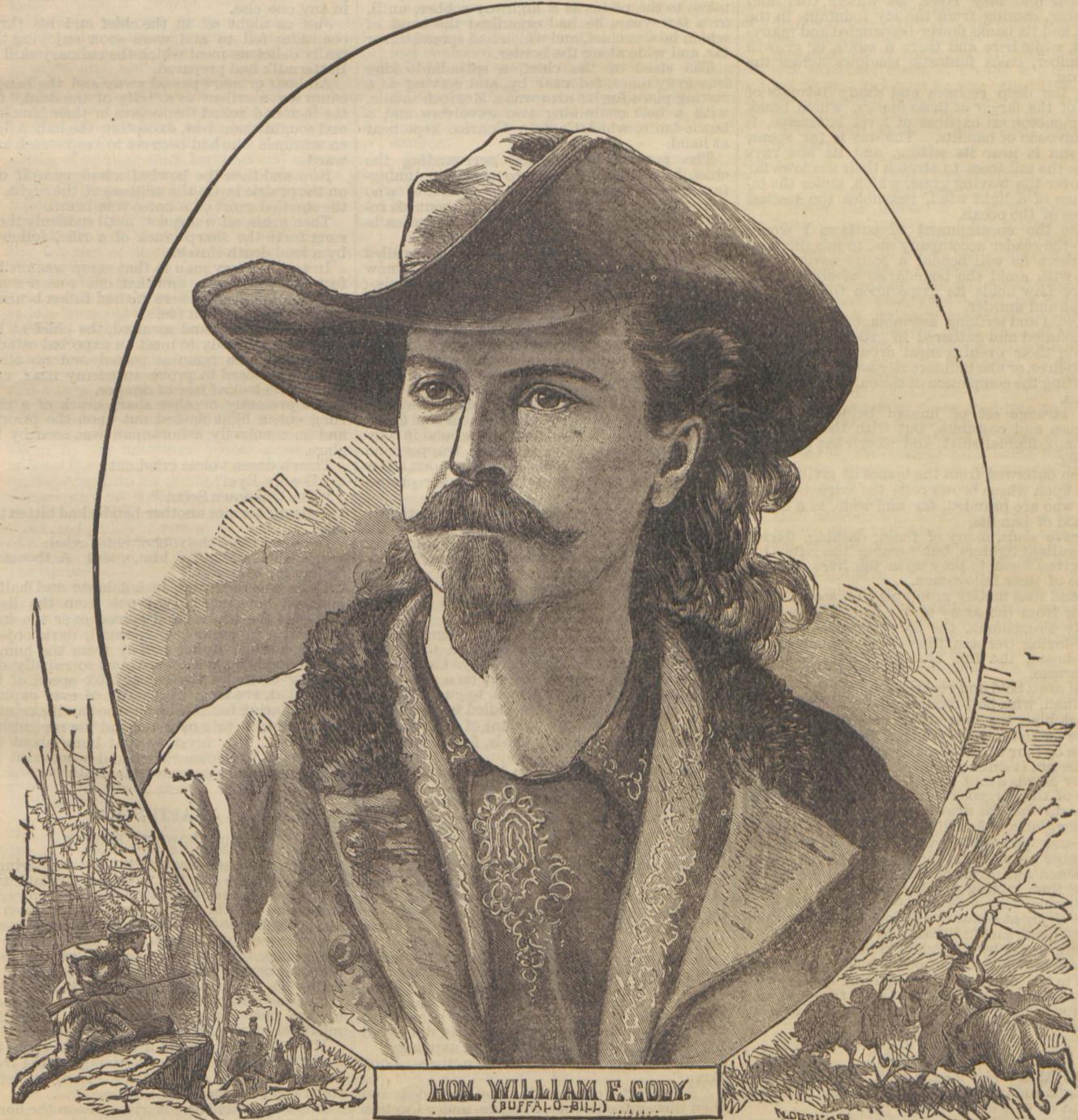
Vol. III.

Single
Number.

BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 55.



DEADLY-EYE, THE UNKNOWN SCOUT.

Deadly-Eye,

THE UNKNOWN SCOUT;

OR,
The Branded Brotherhood.

BY BUFFALO BILL,
AUTHOR OF "KANSAS KING," "THE PHANTOM
SPY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRANDED BROTHERHOOD.

A BIVOUAC of outlaws! a wild-looking but picturesquely camp-scene far out in the "land of the setting sun."

A "prairie sea" upon every hand, here and there dotted with a timber-island, a cool and refreshing covert from the heat of the plain.

Miles and miles of land, unfurrowed by the plowshare, untilled by human hands, stretch away in boundless expanse as far as mortal vision can sweep.

Winding its silvery length along, like a huge serpent crawling across the rolling prairies, is a clear and lazy river, its waters cold and inviting, coming from the icy fountains in the hills, and its banks flower-bespangled and many-blued, while here and there a *motte*, or growth of timber, casts fantastic shadows across the stream.

In the deep recesses and shady retreats of one of the larger of these *mottes*, which break the monotonous expanse of level landscape, is the bivouac of bandits. The day is far spent, the sun is near its setting, and its last rays cause the tall trees to stretch their shadows far out over the waving grass, which, under the influence of a light wind, resembles the restless waves of the ocean.

Into the encampment of outlaws I would have the reader accompany me, in imagination, for there he will behold a scene never to be lost with amid the boundaries of civilization, where Law holds its gripe upon the throat of rapine and murder.

A wild and striking assemblage of horsemen, dismounted and gathered in groups, either preparing their evening meal around the blazing camp-fires, or else indifferently lounging around, awaiting the completion of the culinary arrangements.

A strange set of human beings of many tongues and costumes, but with the buck-skin leggings, flannel shirt, and slouch hat predominating.

Men outlawed from the homes of civilization; men upon whose brows rests the curse of Cain, and who are branded, far and wide, as a brotherhood of bandits.

Brave souls, many of them; dashing, daring and gallant fighters, but turning the gifts God has given them to prey upon the lives and fortunes of their fellow-men.

Amid that motley group may be seen the deserter from the army of the United States, the lively Frenchman, the florid Englishman, the beer-loving German, the swarthy Spaniard, the half-breed, the full blooded Indian, and the American.

All are a bold and reckless set, held in check by one man, who, half-reclining before a bright fire, is watching the movements of his negro cook, and ever and anon addressing some words to the three or four of his comrades around him.

The sun is sinking toward the horizon, where fleecy clouds await to cast their vails before the face of the gorgeous luminary, that the curtains of night may be drawn around the world; lingering glances of sunlight fall athwart the prairie, and, penetrating the deep recesses of the "timber island," gild the silver-mounted accoutrements and arms of the bandit chief, at the same time casting a ruddy glow upon his dark, handsome, but cruel face—a face showing no sign of joy at beauteous nature spread out upon every hand, and indifferent to the thought that his life hangs by a slender thread.

Once that elegant but powerful form had been clad in the uniform of an honored cavalry officer of his country's service, and the dark and lustrous eyes had, amid the brilliant saloons of the distant cities,

"Looked love to eyes
That spoke again."

But that was long ago, and Time had brought many changes, and branded his once proud name with infamy.

Fully six feet in height, and of a supple, graceful form, the chief of the Branded Brotherhood

was clad in a suit of buck-skin pants elaborately worked with beads, and fringed down the outer seams.

Instead of moccasins his feet were incased in high-top cavalry boots, armed with huge spurs, and a blue silk shirt and Mexican jacket, profusely adorned with silver buttons, completed his costume, excepting a gray slouch hat, with exceedingly broad brim, turned up on one side and half-encircled by a black plume upon the other.

The hands and face were burned as brown as the sun and exposure could make them; a heavy brown beard, of a like shade, with his long, curling hair, completely hid the lower features of his face; but his nose was straight and firm, his forehead broad and intellectual, and his eyes strangely fiery and savage in expression, while within their immost depths was an expression hard to fathom, for at times it looked like fear, again was expressive of sadness, and at others of hatred and mischief.

His men knew him only as "The Chief," and along the frontier he was called "Captain Henrico, the Bandit," but what was his real name none knew, or from whence he came, only it was surmised that he had once been a distinguished cavalry officer, who, having been dismissed the service for a crime committed, had taken to the plains as a highway robber, until, in a few years he had organized the band of which he was chief, and which had spread terror far and wide along the border.

The steed of the chief, a splendid-looking iron-gray mare, fed near by, and serving as a resting place for his arm was a Mexican saddle, with a belt containing two revolvers and a bowie-knife, which Captain Henrico kept near at hand.

The persons immediately surrounding the chief consisted of the negro cook, a cunning-faced, wiry fellow, black as a coal, and who never, sleeping or waking, went without his revolver and knife, which he kept in a large leather belt around his waist.

It was said the negro, whom his master called Buttermilk—as a contrast to his color—knew more of the chief's life than did any one else; but, if so, he was never known to betray that knowledge. Then there was an Indian scout, a powerful and evil-looking Sioux, who had betrayed his own people and then sought refuge in the outlaw band, and, thoroughly knowing the whole country, Captain Henrico found him an able ally.

There were, also, two others, both white men; one a square-framed, brutal-faced man of forty-five, whom Henrico had made his second in command, and the other a renegade trapper and hunter, who, having robbed his comrades, a few years before, had sought the band for protection.

Turning to his officer, who was impatiently watching the rather lazy preparations of the negro, Buttermilk, Captain Henrico remarked in a voice strangely soft and pleasant for one who led his wild life:

"I see no reason why the train should not fall easily into our hands, for they must cross the river at a point near here."

"Yes, chief; but if we wait for them to come up here the troop will have rejoined them, and now, you know, the Injun here says Captain La Clyde and his troopers are off on a scout and the train has only its own men to guard it," returned the lieutenant, who hailed to the name of Red Burke, both on account of his red hair and beard and his bloody deeds, for at heart he was a perfect brute.

"The chief's right. You hear me talk, Red Burke, kase ef we waits for them fellers here well and good, for yer see, they'll come unsuspecting like, right onto our trap; but ef we goes out on the prairie to fight 'em, then we'll get some hard knocks and no pay.

"You see I've been in thar train, as I told the chief, and I knows what I've talkin' about," and the trapper squatted down on the ground near the chief, who replied:

"You really went into their train, Long Dave?"

"You bet! I just tolle 'em I was a hunter as was going to the forts, and I tell you they has just got a ticklish lookin' set of fellers to tackle.

"They axed me 'bout you, chief, and ef I thought they'd run across you, and of course I tolle 'em no, and they said ef they did you'd have to git up early to catch them napping."

"How many fighting men are there, Long Dave?"

"Some forty, or more, big boys included; and then there's the twenty troopers under Captain La Clyde, who you might count on, for he just goes scouting around, you see, and has taken a

shine to one of the gals in the train, and he's going to be on hand when it comes to a row, you bet."

"Which way did the cavalry go when they left the train last night?"

"That's jist what I was going to find out when I see'd that devil of a fellow they called Deadly-Eye a-comin' across the prairie and I jist lit out for these diggin's, you bet, chief, kase I knows that fellow, and don't want him near me."

"You refer to the Unknown Scout?"

"Yes; the fellow is getting mighty bold of late."

"He is, indeed, and I would be willing to pay a round sum to take him, for he has thwarted my plans more than once. Well, we'll lie in wait for the train here, and to-night, Long Dave, you and Black Wolf must start out and bring me the exact whereabouts of both the train and the troopers, for this rich harvest must not be lost for want of reaping."

"Now let us have supper, Buttermilk, you lazy dog."

"You be lazy too if you have to cook tough ole buffalo bull a thousand year ole," grumbled the negro, who always had a way of answering back when addressed, and which his master appeared not to notice, but would severely punish in any one else.

Just as night set in the chief and his three comrades fell to and were soon enjoying the really delicious meal which the culinary skill of Buttermilk had prepared.

An hour or more passed away and the bandit camp was as silent as a "city of the dead," for the men had rolled themselves in their blankets and sought their rest, excepting the half a dozen sentinels who had been set to keep watch and ward.

Now and then the howl of a hungry wolf out on the prairie broke the stillness of the night, or the startled snort of a horse was heard.

Then again all was quiet, until suddenly there rung forth the sharp crack of a rifle, followed by a loud death-shriek.

Instantly every man in that camp was on his feet, excepting one, and that one was a sentinel who lay dead where he had fallen beneath the aim of an unseen foe.

In silence the band awaited, the chief at his post, and all ready to meet an expected attack; but slowly the minutes passed and no other sound was heard to prove an enemy near, and the prairie looked free of danger.

But presently another sharp crack of a rifle rung out, a light flashed out upon the prairie, and momentarily a horseman was seen by its glare.

Then a dozen voices cried out:

"Deadly-Eye!"

"The Unknown Scout!"

Beneath his aim another bandit had bitten the dust.

In angry tones the robber chief cried:

"Mount! and after him, men! A thousand dollars for his scalp!"

There was mounting in hot haste and half a hundred horsemen swept out from the dark covert of the timber and spread over the starlit prairie in pursuit of a small, dark object, dimly visible, flying swiftly from the human bloodhounds upon his track, but so rapidly distancing them by the remarkable speed of his horse that, ere long, in despair of ever capturing the daring foe, one by one the bandits returned to camp to talk over, around the replenished camp-fires, the mystery that hung about the life of the Unknown Scout and wonder at his many marvelous escapes from death.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNKNOWN MARKSMAN.

WHEN the horseman, who had so daringly approached the bandits' bivouac and laid two of their number dead beneath his aim, sped across the prairie with a score of horsemen at his heels, he had urged his horse to a speed which caused him to soon draw out of range of their rifles, for he was mounted upon a steed that had never found an equal on the plains.

Having kept up his swift flight for a few miles, and observing that his pursuers had given up the chase, the horseman halted and dismounted to give his horse a short rest.

His eye now caught a rosy light upon the eastern horizon, and then, as though rising from the ocean, sailed upward the moon, launched forth upon her heavenly voyage.

Intently watching the rising moon the horseman suddenly started and bent his gaze more earnestly over the prairie, for across the bright

face of the luminary he distinctly saw several dark objects glide.

Yes, one, two, three, four horsemen—nay more, several more, like specters, glided by, going at a swift pace in a southerly direction.

Instantly the horseman turned and tightened his saddle-girths, and then looked well to his weapons ere he prepared to mount.

Standing as he did then by his horse, and in a clear moonlight, which fell full upon him, he was a striking-looking man, of perhaps twenty-seven years of age.

His face was browned most thoroughly, but every feature was cast in a perfect mold, and each was indicative of stern resolve and conscious power.

The eyes were deer-like in size and expression, and would have been the envy of any woman on account of their dark beauty, and the fascinating expression which dwelt in them—an expression that none could fathom.

His forehead was broad and high, his nose slender and straight, and his mouth stern, determined, and perhaps with a look of daring thereon amounting to recklessness.

An imperial, worn long, and a drooping mustache were all the beard he wore, and his brown, waving hair fell down his back nearly to his waist, giving him a still more effeminate look.

His form was just six feet in his moccasins, yielding in every movement, and with broad, square shoulders, that indicated his great strength and agility.

Upon his head he wore a regular Mexican sombrero, exceedingly broad in brim, and surrounded by a scarlet *crepe* sash, with the ends hanging down behind, while his form was clad in a richly ornamented suit of buck-skin, consisting of hunting-shirt, leggings and moccasins.

If the rider deserves notice so also does the steed, a large, long-bodied, clean-limbed bay, possessing every requisite for great speed and endurance, qualities he possessed to such an extent, that his master had named him after the sea-bird of tireless wing, only calling him Prairie Gull.

The saddle and bridle were of Mexican pattern, and a long horse-hair lasso hung from the saddle-horn, upon either side of which were two holsters, with the butts of silver-mounted revolvers protruding therefrom, while behind the seat was a tightly rolled *serape* or blanket, a leather haversack and ammunition-pouch, and a bow and quiver of arrows, proving that the horseman did not put his whole trust in fire-arms, his knife and the speed of his steed.

Having at length discovered the direction taken by the horsemen, whose presence near at hand the rising moon had betrayed, the horseman sprung into his saddle; a word to his noble animal and he was off, skimming the prairie almost as does the sea-gull skim over the sea.

A rapid gallop of two miles and the tall trees of a *motte* loomed up before him; a few moments more placed him beneath the dark shadows of the timber.

Then, turning, he glanced out over the moonlit prairie. His eyes fell upon the dark forms of half a dozen or more horsemen coming directly toward the *motte*.

"Well, I hold the vantage-ground thus far, and I'll not yield it without a struggle, whoever they may be," and the horseman pushed further into the dense thicket, where, dismounting, he spoke a word to his horse and the faithful animal lay down, the better to conceal him from view.

A few moments passed and presently the horsemen entered the *motte* and the murmur of voices was heard; then a bright light glared through the trees.

"As I thought, they came here to camp for the night, and now I'll see who they are," and the horseman arose and stealthily approached the spot where the new-comers soon had a bright fire blazing, around which he beheld a group of seven human beings, five of whom were Sioux warriors, in all their war-paint, and the other two were pale-faces, a man and a woman.

Stealing still closer the horseman observed that the steeds had been staked, as if for the night, and the Indians were preparing their supper of buffalo-meat toasted on the coals, while the whites stood listlessly by, their hands bound behind them, and the expression of their faces proving them to be prisoners.

"They are certainly not residents on the border. I have it; they belong to the wagon-train now coming hither and which I must warn of the presence of the Branded Brotherhood in this neighborhood; but, indeed, that maiden is most beautiful," and the horseman gazed intent-

ly upon the fair prisoner, a young girl, of scarcely more than seventeen, with a truly lovely face, although saddened by her captivity.

Her wealth of golden hair had become loosened from its confinement, and hung in wavy masses far down her back, concealing the rude bonds that held her hands behind her.

She wore a straw sun-hat and was clad in a riding-habit of neat home-spun, but which was torn by the rough usage she had received at the hands of her savage captors.

Her white companion was a man of perhaps twenty-five, his face bold and reckless, and with a fair amount of good looks.

He was attired as a civilian, in a suit of dark, gray cloth, wore cavalry boots, and a dove-colored soft hat.

The horseman took the whole scene carefully in, and then thought:

"Well, there are five against me; but what should I care for five Sioux braves? Those prisoners must be released and I'll bide my time and do it; so here goes."

The spy quietly settled himself full length upon the ground, and with the patience of an Indian awaited until the supper had been disposed of and the Indians had prepared for the night's rest, after having securely bound the captives to a tree.

One of the warriors then shouldered his rifle and moved off to act as sentinel, while his four comrades rolled themselves in their blankets and stretched out before the fire.

The Indian sentinel first cautiously advanced toward the edge of the *motte* and took a careful survey of the moonlit prairie, after which he made a rapid circuit of the timber, his eyes keenly glancing far and near for lurking danger.

Having apparently satisfied even his cautious self that all was quiet and safe, the Indian approached the camp-fire once more, coming in a line that would lead him directly upon the crouching horseman.

Slowly he approached, wholly unconscious of danger until within a few feet of his foe, and then his eyes fell upon the dark object in his path.

But, ere he could draw back or utter a cry of alarm, the horseman was upon him, his iron grasp upon his throat.

One, two rapid knife-thrusts, and the Indian sentinel was

"Off duty forever."

But the almost noiseless struggle had caught the quick ears of the yet wide-awake Sioux around the camp-fire.

In alarm they sprung to their feet, one to fall dead across the burning logs, a bullet in his brain, another to utter his dying war-whoop as a leaden messenger from the horseman's repeating rifle pierced his heart.

Bounding from his covert with a wild, prolonged and ringing war-whoop, one well known on the border, the horseman rushed upon the two remaining red-skins, but in dismay they had turned to flee, for their unseen foe had every advantage, and rapidly through the timber they darted to seek safety.

A long, shrill whistle then pierced the grove as the horseman sped after them; then another shot was heard, and a fourth warrior fell to the ground in death-agony, while, brought to bay, the remaining red-skin turned to meet his enemy. Raising his rifle the savage fired hastily upon his rapidly advancing foe.

But his aim was untrue, as a wild war-whoop from the pursuer at once assured him, and the next moment the two met face to face armed with their glittering knives.

The Indian warrior, a man of Herculean frame and strength, might have given the horseman a desperate encounter, but, just as their knives clashed, there came a rapid clattering of hoofs, and from the dark timber dashed Prairie Gull, neighing loudly as he rushed to the side of his master.

Believing a host of horsemen upon him, the Sioux brave uttered a whoop of terror, and, ere the horseman could prevent, had darted away and disappeared in the thicket.

"Old comrade, you have frightened that red-skin almost to death," laughed the horseman, as his steed halted beside him, and then he continued:

"Let him go, poor devil, but sooner or later his time will come. Out of five scalps I have taken four, and those should suffice. Now to release the prisoners."

Quickly retracing his way toward the campfire, the horseman soon stood in the presence of the prisoners, saying in a pleasant voice:

"Cheer up, my friends, for I have charge of this ranch now."

"Oh, sir, you are very, *very* brave and noble, and you have saved us," cried the maiden, seizing both of the horseman's hands, as soon as her own were released from their bonds.

"And I offer my thanks, sir, for I deemed it all up with us," said the maiden's companion, and both of them gazed earnestly into the face of the splendid-looking man before them, who replied indifferently:

"No thanks for performing one's duty; but you are not safe yet, for there may be more red-skins about, so we'll get away from here at once. You are not too tired to stand a rapid ride, miss?"

"Oh, no, sir, and it cannot be far to the wagon-train, for we only left it about an hour before sunset."

"On what trail were you, can I ask?"

"We were en route toward the head-waters of the Republican river, sir, on the trail from Fort Hays."

"Then your train is within twenty miles of here and doubtless encamped upon the river for the night. If you will aid me, sir, we will take in the little lot of cattle the red-skins have willed us and decamp."

A few moments more and the horseman and his new-found companions were mounted and rapidly leaving the *motte*, carrying with them the ponies that had been ridden by the five Indian warriors. It was with perfect trust that the maiden and her fellow captive yielded to the guidance of their brave companion, for he had informed them, in answer to a question of the young girl, that he was called Deadly-Eye, the Unknown Scout, a name often heard by them around the nightly camp-fires, and connected with deeds of marvelous daring and mystery.

CHAPTER III.

A TRAITOR IN CAMP.

UPON the banks of a small stream, and beneath the shelter of a few scattering prairie trees, a large wagon-train was encamped during the night on which the scenes related in the foregoing chapter transpired.

There were fully half a hundred wagons, with their covers, once snow-white, but now stained brown with exposure and travel; while, staked out upon the prairie, were herds of horses and cattle, enjoying the rich verdure around them.

The wagons were encamped in a crescent form, with either end resting upon the river bank. Within the space thus inclosed a score of bright camp-fires were shedding their ruddy light far across the prairie.

Through the camp was a scene of busy life, preparing the evening meal being the principal duty in progress. There appeared to rest upon all a shade of sadness, for from their number two were missing, and around their camp-fires their absence was sorely felt, for, a few hours before, they had started forth for a gallop over the prairies, and a scout coming in reported that they had been captured by a band of Sioux Indians.

But what could be done? Night was coming rapidly on; it was camping time, and until the morrow no move for their recovery could be made, for it was impossible to follow the trail of the Indians in the darkness.

The wagon-train consisted of a dozen families, their teamsters and guides, moving from the boundaries of civilization to the prairies of the far West, there to build themselves new homes and new associations, afar from the haunts of their childhood.

With one family particularly, among these daring pioneers, we will have to become friends, reader, for they will occupy no inferior place in this romance of life on the far frontier.

In that family were five persons, consisting of Major Austin Conrad, his wife—a sad-faced matron of forty-five, a son of twenty-two, Gerald Conrad, and a daughter of seventeen, the joyous and beautiful Sibyl. Then there were a niece of the major, and his ward, Ruth Whitfield, a dashing, brilliant-looking brunette of twenty, who had once been belle in her native city until financial reverses had reduced her once proud parents to want, and cast her upon the bounty of her uncle.

Major Conrad was an ex-army officer, who in early life had seen much service on the frontier, but at length married his cousin and settled down to private life and the enjoyment of his riches.

But reverses had at last befallen him and he was almost crushed beneath his sorrows and misfortunes, until his brave wife begged that he would leave the scene of his troubles and find a new home far in the western country.

New life seemed instilled into the major a

the thought, and two months after found him *en route* for a home on the border, accompanied by his loving wife, noble children, and his niece.

Joining a western moving train, they decided to accompany the emigrants, and the major, upon account of his military experience and former knowledge of the country, was made the captain of the expedition.

Without serious mishap the train had wended its way for many weary miles, and then it came into a country where the brave pioneers felt that danger was upon every hand.

But, undaunted, they pressed on, well-knowing that if they could once get a foothold and establish a settlement, they would be able to bid defiance to all troublesome bands of Indians and the desperate band of Branded Brotherhood, who, rumor said, warred upon all settlers on the frontier.

At length they met with their first serious mishap in the capture of Sibyl Conrad and Howard Talbot, a young man who had joined the train ere it departed from Kansas city, and who, by his genial manners and undisputed courage, had won the esteem of every one in the pioneer band.

Sibyl and Howard Talbot had ridden forth to look up a good camping-ground for the night, they had declared as their intention, and a returning hunter had reported that they had been suddenly surrounded and captured by a band of Sioux warriors.

The hunter had then concealed himself in a *motte* until the Indians had disappeared with their prisoners, and then coming rapidly to the train had brought the evil tidings that dealt a sad blow to all, for Sibyl was loved by all who knew her, and what might be her sad fate none knew.

Slowly the hours of night passed away in the encampment on the stream, and with the first glimmer of day in the east all were up and busy, for a band of twenty horsemen, led by Major Conrad and guided by the hunter, who had seen the capture of Sibyl and Howard Talbot, were preparing to start forth to the rescue.

Suddenly a cry of alarm was heard, and the guards reported a body of horsemen approaching, and through the dim morning light a small cavalcade was indistinctly visible.

Nearer and nearer they approached, and as the daylight grew brighter the cry of alarm turned to one of joy, for the forms of Sibyl Conrad and Howard Talbot were recognized, accompanied by one other, a tall, splendid-looking horseman, followed by a number of led animals.

Quickly the cry of the guards was taken up, and then through the entire encampment resounded the notes of joy, until, as the party rode up, a ringing welcome awaited them, and their friends gathered around in delight at their return.

Instantly Sibyl was folded in the arms of her loving parents, and warm grasps met the hand of Howard Talbot, who, in a few words, made known their brave rescue at the hands of the Unknown Scout.

"The Unknown Scout! You are then the man that is called Deadly-Eye, on account of his wonderful marksmanship, and whose past life none on the border know?" said Major Conrad, advancing quickly and gazing intently into the handsome face of the man before him, and upon whom every eye was now turned with admiration and awe, for his wonderful career and the mystery hanging about him were known far and wide, and invested him with a strange charm.

"I am called Deadly-Eye, sir, and I am glad to have saved your daughter, Major Conrad; but, can I ask, as I learn you are destined for the head-waters of the Republican, why I find you bearing so much out of your way to the southward?" and the Unknown Scout spoke modestly and as if anxious to turn the conversation from himself.

"We are under the guidance of an experienced plainsman, sir. Yonder he comes now," replied Major Conrad.

The Unknown Scout turned around at the words of the officer and glanced in the direction of the coming man.

It was the hunter and the guide of the train—a man of almost giant frame, attired in a suit of buck-skin, and with a face scarred in such a manner by a knife-cut across the nose and cheek, as to give it a most forbidding expression.

One glance at the hunter, and Deadly-Eye exclaimed:

"What! *that* man your guide? Red Dick, do you know me?"

With a bound the Unknown Scout was in front of the hunter, whose brown face turned

white, and his eyes lighted up with a malicious expression as he said, savagely:

"A man who has left a mark on me such as I bear is not soon forgotten, I'll take my Bible oath."

Instantly the giant hunter drew a long knife and stood at bay, as though expecting an attack, while the Unknown Scout quickly drew his own keen blade and appeared as if about to advance upon him.

"Hold, guide! Hold, sir. There must be some mistake here, for this man has been a most faithful guide and was strongly recommended to us," and Major Conrad stepped forward between the two men.

"There is no mistake, Major Conrad. This man is a renegade desperado and we have met before, as he well knows. Stand aside, please, and let Red Dick prove his boasted words to meet me whenever he crossed my path," and the Unknown Scout's face became hard and stern, and his nerves like iron, and he quickly stepped nearer to his foe.

What deadly feud existed between these two men? What terrible deed was there to be avenged by one or the other? None in all that band of hardy pioneers could tell, and with terrible interest they gathered around and watched the two central figures.

A step nearer advanced the Unknown Scout, his eyes ablaze and fastened upon Red Dick, who somewhat nervously awaited the expected attack, which now seemed most imminent, for none present seemed called upon to interfere.

But, suddenly, a slight and graceful form glided in between the two men, and the tiny hand of Sibyl Conrad was laid upon the arm of the Unknown Scout, and the beautiful face upturned to his, while her sweet voice said:

"Surely, one so brave, so noble, would not stain his hand unnecessarily with blood in the presence of women and children."

The face of Deadly-Eye flushed, his knife was lowered immediately, and he replied in deep, earnest tones:

"Lady, you know not the accursed life of this man, or you would not plead for him; but it shall be as you request."

Then, turning to his burly enemy, the Unknown Scout continued, sternly:

"Red Dick, this lady has prevented an encounter that should have ended in your death or mine, and now I bid you leave this camp or by the God of Heaven you shall die."

The giant hunter turned an earnest look into his foe's face, and reading there only deadly determination, said:

"I'll go now, Scout, 'cause you hold the winning card; but Red Dick will be on your trail hot in the future."

So saying he wheeled away, walked to one of the wagons, and, taking his rifle and accoutrements, mounted his tall, raw-boned horse and departed, leaving the Unknown Scout master of the situation.

But hardly had the huge form of the exiled horse and rider disappeared over a roll in the prairie when suddenly he reappeared, and at his back rode over a hundred mounted Sioux warriors, who came rushing down upon the train with discordant yells and the war-cries of their tribe.

CHAPTER IV. RUNNING THE GANTLET.

"EVERY man to his post."

It was the clear and commanding voice of the Unknown Scout that gave the order, and the effect upon the pioneers was electrical, while they felt that in him they had a leader who fully understood the cunning of the Indians, and whose bravery was upon every tongue on the frontier.

True, strange stories were told of the remarkable man, and the Indians and a few bordermen held the superstitious idea that he was leagued with the Evil One, for, around his whole life hung a mystery, the curtain of which none could raise.

Frequently he had aided frontiersmen and also wagon-trains moving through the Indian country, and also had given warning to settlements of the coming of the red-skin and the Branded Brotherhood; but that he was looked upon by the military with some suspicion—was known to be on intimate terms with many Indian warriors, and had often been seen in close vicinity to the stronghold of Ricardo and his cruel band, were acknowledged facts.

Still, the emigrants were glad that Deadly-Eye was with them, and his having just rescued from captivity two of their train, caused them to look most kindly upon him.

"Scout, you are well accustomed to scenes

like this one about to be forced upon us, and I would like you to take command," cried Major Conrad, advancing quickly to the side of the Unknown Scout, who glanced out upon the prairie toward the coming Indians, as he replied:

"Fortunately the train is in *corral*, sir, and the men are ready for a fight. I would advise that the women and children be placed under cover of the river-bank yonder, and the ravine will also protect the horses and cattle, while, with the wagons for a breastwork, the men can hold out splendidly."

This advice was acted upon, and in a few moments the camp was ready for action.

Stationing himself upon the outer edge of the line of wagons, Deadly-Eye was seen to suddenly raise his repeating rifle; a quick aim, a shout, and a painted warrior fell from his horse and a yell of exultation from the emigrants was answered by a series of wild war-whoops from the infuriated Indians.

"Now, Major Conrad, you see that I knew yonder renegade guide well, for he is doubtless the leader of the approaching band of red-skins, and was guiding you into a trap," said the Unknown Scout.

"We have much to thank you for, sir; but the Indians have halted."

"Yes, they are too wary to charge these lines in the daytime, and—"

"And what, sir?" asked Major Conrad, as the Scout paused, thoughtfully.

"And by nightfall I can bring relief, for not many miles from here is a band of Pawnees hunting buffalo."

"But, sir, you can never escape from here, for see, the Indians are beginning to surround us, and two separate parties are swimming the river."

The Unknown Scout took in the scene at once, and then said, quietly:

"You must hold the red devils at bay. Mind, act only on the defensive, and I will run the gantlet of their fire, and bring what relief I can."

A shrill whistle followed, and the steed of Deadly-Eye trotted up to his master, and stood ready for his command.

Remonstrance with the Scout was useless, for after another warning to all, he sprung into the saddle and rode down to the river.

A word of encouragement to Prairie Gull, and the noble animal bounded into the clear waters, and was soon swimming bravely toward the other shore, followed by the eyes of all the emigrants, who were wafting God speed to the daring man periling his life to aid them.

Ere half the river was crossed the Indians discovered the Scout, and with discordant yells the two parties, one up and the other down the stream, rushed to cut him off ere he could escape.

The Scout observed their intention but kept bravely on, urging his horse, however, to swim still faster.

Leading one of these parties who were rushing toward the point where the Scout was to land, was the traitor guide, Red Dick, who now seemed to feel assured that his revenge would be satisfied, for he urged his large roan forward at a tremendous pace, quickly shooting ahead of the inferior horses ridden by the red-skins.

Soon the Scout reached the other shore, and dismounting, the horse shook himself like a huge Newfoundland dog.

Then the girths were tightened, and the holster pistols returned to their places; after which the Scout mounted as coolly as though almost certain death did not stare him in the face.

The deadly rifle was raised, and with a quick aim was fired in the direction of the band furthest off. A red brave threw up his arms and fell from his steed, to be trampled upon by those behind.

Again the rifle rung out, and the large roan ridden by Red Dick was seen to stagger, stumble, and then go heavily down, hurling his giant rider with terrible force upon the ground.

From the lips of Deadly-Eye then broke forth his wild and blood-stirring war-whoop of defiance, and away bounded Prairie Gull, keeping an equal distance between the two lines rushing furiously upon him and hardly more than two hundred yards distant.

"On, on, my good steed, for you have a brave duty to perform, and the bright eyes of beauty are upon you," cried Deadly-Eye, as he turned in his saddle and glanced back toward the camp. Seeing the action the pioneers gave him three hearty cheers, which the Indians answered with their discordant yells.

"But, what is the daring rider going to do? Has his courage failed him? Is he mad?" Such were the hurried questions that burst

Deadly Eye.

from the astonished emigrants' lips, as they saw Deadly-Eye suddenly come to a halt, and coolly gaze first upon one side and then upon the other.

In surprise, also, the Indians saw him halt, and their superstitious minds were impressed with the idea that he was laughing at their efforts to take him, and intended to escape by some supernatural means unknown to them, for, often before had they known him to elude them when in their very grasp.

With their leader dismounted, and apparently hurt, for Red Dick was seated beside his dead horse, the Indians hardly knew what to do, and, as they drew nearer and nearer to the mysterious Scout, they gradually checked the speed of their horses, until the smaller party, consisting of a dozen braves, came to a halt, and with wondering eyes and wild gestures, seemed to be holding a council of war.

This was what Deadly-Eye had doubtless expected, for, as soon as the squadron halted, he wheeled Prairie Gull directly toward them, and with the air ringing and echoing with his terrible war-cries, and a revolver in each hand, charged directly upon the astonished savages, and added to their consternation by opening a brisk and telling fire upon them, which proving fatal in several instances with horses and riders, the frightened braves turned and fled, and with the speed of an arrow the Unknown Scout rushed on toward the open prairie, having safely run the terrible gauntlet.

Then, as the emigrants looked with eager eyes, they beheld the cause of the sudden movement of Deadly-Eye, for directly in his former path arose the forms of a dozen painted warriors, doubtless of the same band, and who were hiding in a shallow gulch and would have sprung up in the pathway of the Scout, had not his quick eye detected the plumed head of some brave too eager to catch his prey to keep wholly concealed.

Long watched the emigrants the flying Prairie Gull, and they saw with pleasure that the Indians quickly gave up the chase, for the famous steed of the Scout left them rapidly behind, and in an hour appeared as a mere speck upon the prairie.

CHAPTER V.

THE HUNTER'S CABIN HOME.

FAR from the home of his kindred, far from the home of any of his race, and in the wilds where the red-men roamed without restraint, was the cabin of Alfred Carter.

Three years before the opening scenes of this story, Alfred Carter had squatted upon the banks of the Republican river, and with the aid of only his brave wife and pretty daughter, Rose, and his young son, Edgar, he had built a stout and comfortable cabin, half fort, half house.

The prairies around him furnished food for his small family, and his cattle roamed near at hand until the shades of evening caused them to be housed for safety.

A quiet, sad-looking man, ever generous and peaceable, Alfred Carter had no enemies, and even the Sioux were friendly to him, although at war with the whites, for the settler had often fed them from his table, and when their great chief was severely wounded and would have died for want of care, Alfred Carter had nursed him back to life, and forever won his friendship.

Seated in the cabin door, upon the day that the Unknown Scout ran the gauntlet of the band of Sioux warriors, was a maiden of eighteen, with large velvety eyes, a dark complexion, and long waving black hair.

The maiden was Rose Carter. She was engaged in knitting a pair of cotton socks for her father, for she was a true frontier girl, ever industrious and brave.

Presently a shadow fell upon her, and glancing up, Rose beheld beside her an Indian maiden of sixteen, a beautiful child of the forest, with a graceful, slender form, clothed in a handsome suit of bead-wrought buck-skin, and with a crown of richly-colored feathers upon her head.

"Who are you, girl, and what can I do for you?" said Rose, softly, struck with the great beauty and grace of the Indian maiden.

"I am the Red Bud of the Forest, the child of the mighty Pawnee chief, and I have come from my village beyond the prairie to tell the pale-face maiden to beware of the false tongue of the pale-face brave with eyes like the skies, for he would lead her from her happy home."

"Of whom do you speak, Red Bud of the Forest?" said the mystified Rose.

"Of the white brave whom the Forest Rose loves as she does the sunshine, the trees, the

birds, the rivers. He has a false tongue, so let the White Rose beware. Red Bud of the Forest has spoken," and without another word the Indian girl turned and glided away, turning no ear to the call of Rose Carter, who plead for her to return.

Long sat the lovely girl, pondering over what she had heard, and wondering if she could refer to one whom she loved most dearly, and who was then absent, and had been for months, gone to the Eastern settlements for awhile ere he returned to make her his wife.

Then over her face stole a look of distrust of him who had won her young heart, for the words of the Forest Red Bud had left a deep impression.

Presently her mother returned from milking the cows, and Alfred Carter from a day's hunt, loaded down with game, while her brother, two years the junior of Rose, came up from the river with long string of fish.

The night shades fell upon the earth, and around the well-spread board gathered the settler's family—the cheerful fire, comfortable room, and pleasant faces presenting a happy and homelike scene, and yet the same feeling of dread, of coming evil, clutched at the heart of Rose Carter, and the smile upon her face was forced.

Presently there was a loud bark from the watchful dog without, a shot followed, a yelp, and then heavy blows upon the door.

Springing to their feet, the father and son seized their rifles, while the mother and daughter in considerable alarm awaited the result.

"Who is it that thus comes to my cabin?" cried Alfred Carter, in a stern voice.

"Open your door, old man, or it will be the worse for you," replied a coarse voice outside.

"And why should I open my door to you? Had you come as a friend you would have been welcome; but as you come as a foe I will meet you as you deserve."

"The Branded Brotherhood parley not long, old man," suddenly rung out a clear, stern voice, and with a few heavy blows from without, the door crushed in, and one of the Brotherhood rushed across the threshold, to fall dead with a shot from Edgar's rifle through the heart.

Another shared the same fate at the hands of Alfred Carter, and then into the cabin poured a score of desperate men, and the brave old settler fell beneath a sweeping blow from Ricardo's knife, just as Red Burke brought the butt of his pistol down upon the head of Edgar.

"Ha! spare the women!" cried Ricardo; but, alas! the order was too late to save poor Mrs. Carter, who, with a shriek of terror and agony, met her death at the hands of one of the band, while another seized the fainting Rose around the waist, crying:

"I've got the richest prize; the gal's mine."

One glance in the beautiful face, and Ricardo, the bandit chief, staggered back, his hand upon his head, while he cried aloud:

"God in heaven! who is that girl?"

"It don't make no difference, chief, who she mout be, but she's my prize," insolently replied the ruffian, who still held her in his arms.

"Release that maiden instantly, sir," cried Ricardo, his face strangely pale and stern.

"You bet I won't do it!" replied the man.

A quick shot followed, a cry of agony, and a stream of hot blood burst from a bullet-wound in the head of the renegade, as he fell dead, still clutching in his strong arms the fainting form of Rose Carter.

"Take that girl from that hound's grasp, and see to it, Red Burke, that no harm befall her, for if there does there shall be weeping and wailing in this band," and thus saying, the robber chief set to work to examine the contents of the cabin, for, to gain booty had this raid been made by the Branded Brotherhood upon the quiet home of poor Alfred Carter.

It did not take long for those experienced hands to go through the humble cabin, and then the order was given to mount. The band departed, Ricardo at their head, and by his side mounted upon her own horse, which the chief had ordered saddled for her, was the weeping Rose, who had returned to consciousness to find her parents and brother slain, and herself in the power of the bandit chief.

Strangely soft and kind was Ricardo's manner toward the sorrowing girl, but he was nevertheless so firm in his purpose that she had to accompany him to his stronghold. What would be her fate she dared not think, as she rode quietly along with the bitter, scalding tears coursing down her cheeks, and a terrible dread at her heart.

Swiftly on rode the band of the Branded Brotherhood, taking a course down the river,

until the quick ear of the chief detected distant firing, and he suddenly drew rein.

"What can that mean?" he cried, striving to pierce the darkness of the prairie in the direction of the sound.

"I'll tell you, chief; it's the train being pitched into by some roving band of Injuns, and if we wants any of the goods we'd better ride fur it, kase you see thar's a host of red-skins whar all that shootin' is going on."

"You are right, Long Dave, and the train is bearing to the southward, contrary to our expectations; so come on, and we'll drive off the red-skins and then wipe out the settlers."

A yell of joy answered the words of the chief, for the men were anxious to get a chance to make a capture of the wagon-train, which Long Dave had reported to be an exceedingly rich one in supplies of all kinds, and money.

Almost with the speed of the wind the cavalcade spurred on, Ricardo leaving Rose with a guard and the led horses bearing the booty taken in the recent foraging expeditions of the band.

An hour's ride, and the flashes of distant firing were visible, and the rapid discharges proved that the battle was raging most savagely, and that the defenders of the wagon-train were holding out most bravely against the overwhelming numbers that were attacking them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE FOR VICTORY.

As Long Dave had said, the settlers' train had been attacked by the Indians—the same band that had besieged them all day, awaiting for night to come on so that they could attack them with greater safety to themselves and less danger of defeat, for Red Dick, having recovered partially from the effects of his severe fall, was determined that he would yet be revenged upon all who had witnessed his disgraceful departure from his position as guide.

Wistfully had the eyes of the emigrants scanned the prairie all that long day, in hopes of seeing the coming of the Unknown Scout and re-enforcements; but night came and no succor was visible, and with determined manner the men set to work to defend to the end of their lives their families and their riches.

As soon as it was dark the Indians commenced the attack, and charged boldly down upon the train; but during the day the emigrants had strongly fortified their position, and after a sharp and short fight the attacking party fell back.

Yet they did not dream of defeat, and their savage minds began to plot various methods of taking the settlers at a disadvantage, for the Indian never cares to fight an open battle if he can gain his ends by cunning and strategy.

Falling in one plan after the other, Red Dick at length determined to lead one desperate charge, in column, hoping to break through the line by mere weight and numbers, and he was preparing his red allies for the work, when suddenly a cry of alarm was heard in their rear, and up dashed the Branded Brotherhood, with their desperate chief at their head.

The Sioux warriors at first thought they were attacked by a troop of soldiers, and began to scatter in all directions, when the loud voice of Red Dick recalled them, for he recognized the commanding form of Ricardo, and riding up to him, cried:

"Hallo, chief! have you come to aid me in a division of the spoils?"

Ricardo turned his keen look upon the renegade, and apparently recognizing him, replied: "You are then leading this attack upon my wagon-train, renegade?"

"Your train, chief? Not so fast—for I guided this train from Kansas City," replied Red Dick.

"Yes, guided them into a trap, for you are backed by your band of Dog Soldier Sioux, I see."

"And they'll stick to me too, you bet, chief. Once, I owed allegiance to you, but I got tired of hard knocks and little pay, so I sided with these Injuns and they made me their chief, and they've been waiting for me to bring out this train for weeks. Now, I tell you, they are a *leetle* too strong for me, I admit, for we've tried 'em for some time; but there's honor among thieves, you know, chief, and I'll share squarely with you and the boys if you give me a lift."

"Red Dick, you are a fool, to think I would share a prize with you and your red hounds. True, there was a truce between your band of red devils and my men; but, you are a deserter from my ranks, and if you do not immediately draw off your band, I'll shoot you down as I would a dog, and then scalp every one of your gang that I can catch," and Ricardo spoke

sternly, and turning to Red Burke, his lieutenant, gave an order in a low voice.

"Now, look here, boss, you don't hold the ace as much as you think, 'cause my red-skins ain't a-goin' to 'low no foolishness, if we has to fight for it, and as to killing a fellow like a dog, why, two kin play at that game, and no questions axed."

As Red Dick spoke, he gave a loud warwhoop, and leveled his pistol at Ricardo, who as quick as lightning had his own weapon covering the head of the renegade, and quietly, but threateningly, the two men stood at bay, while around them gathered their separate bands.

What might have been the result of this impromptu duel between the two chiefs, it would be hard to say, for, just at that moment there was a terrific discharge of firearms, fired in regular order, a loud cheering, a rushing of hoofs, and ere the surprised Indians and bandits could offer any resistance, a squadron of cavalry charged through their line, firing as they rode and dashing swiftly toward the camp, the next moment were safe within the fortification, while cheer after cheer rung out from the rejoicing emigrants.

"Cusses on it, chief! While we's quarreling here like two tomcats on a fence, that cussed Captain La Clyde and his troopers has gotten through our line and reinforced the emigrants," growled Red Dick savagely, at the same time lowering his pistol.

"That is true, Red Dick, and after all, we had better unite our forces and wage a common war upon the train," responded Ricardo; but it was too dark for his foe to see the evil look of mischief that flashed in his eyes.

"I'm agreed, boss, kase you see it's no use talking about us rooting out that nest of hornets unless we jine forces."

"Very well, Red Dick. Now, my plan is that you take the greater part of your red-skins up the river *above* the camp, and taking to the water swim down and attack them from that quarter, while I keep up a constant fire upon them in our front, and when you have landed and give the signal, I will charge with my men, aided by those you leave with me."

"It's a good plan, Ricardo, and we'll set out at once," replied Red Dick, and accompanied by the greater number of his savage men, the desperado strode away, leaving a small guard over his horses.

As cunning as was Red Dick, and as wicked, he was no match for Ricardo, for he had not anticipated that the chief would betray him; but hardly had the renegade and his red allies been gone fifteen minutes, when the remaining Indians had been quietly surrounded by the Branded Brotherhood, and wholly unsuspecting treachery, were suddenly terrified by being unexpectedly set upon by those whom they believed their friends.

Without warning, the Brotherhood instantly rushed upon the Indian warriors, and ere the slightest resistance could be offered, a score of them lay dead upon the prairie; but still the work of slaughter went on, until the few remaining savages crouched together in dismay, not knowing which way to turn, for although it was the Indian method to surprise and massacre defenseless victims, they had never before had the tables turned upon them.

"Kill every cursed red heathen; leave not one to escape and warn his companions," cried Ricardo. In vain did the terrified wretches attempt to break through the human barrier that surrounded them, for everywhere they were met by steel and bullet.

At length the slaughter ended, and with a grim and cruel smile, Ricardo turned to Red Burke, and said:

"Burke, yonder comes the maiden and led horses, and I wish you to collect these Indian ponies, and with a guard of ten men move down the river to the next motte and await until you hear from me."

"That will leave you only forty men, chief, with which to tackle the camp and the Ingins too."

"True, but I intend Red Dick and his crew shall play Kilkenny cats with the settlers, and when they have about used each other up, I will be on hand to reap the spoils. Now be off at once, and mind you, Burke, treat that girl with every respect."

"I hear you, chief."

"And see that you heed; now I will be off to the river-bank, and aid the settlers in driving off Red Dick and his devils."

"You wouldn't fire upon the red-skins, chief?"

"Certainly; each one I slay is one out of my way to eventual success."

So saying, Ricardo called to his band to follow

him, mounted his horse, and rode slowly in the direction of the camp.

Approaching within a hundred yards, under cover of a few straggling trees, he sent Long Dave and his Indian scout on abreast, to creep up the river-bank, and give warning when Red Dick and his followers should attempt a landing.

He had not long to wait before the two scouts returned, and reported the river black with the heads of the attacking party, and then, lest the settlers should really be surprised, and the Indians take the camp without his aid, Ricardo gave a low order, and under cover of the bank the Brotherhood approached until they could indistinctly see the dark mass upon the water, which they knew to be the swimming warriors.

In the encampment all was quiet as the grave, and every glimmer of light had disappeared; but, whether it was from negligence in keeping guard, or from watchfulness, none knew, and the chief felt that he had to be wary, for Captain La Clyde was known to be an expert and daring fighter, and might be setting some trap in which to catch his enemies.

Slowly and steadily the moving mass of heads swerved shoreward, the waters undisturbed by a single ripple, so quietly did the Indians swim, and at last several tall forms reached the shore and stood upright.

Others followed, and the braves were preparing for the deadly rush, their hearts beating with joy at the hope of success.

"Aim true, men; let every shot tell. Fire!"

In answer to the low, stern order of the bandit chief, a terrible volley rang forth from the river-bank, and a withering hail of lead was poured upon the human mass, who seemed to sink beneath the deadly assault.

Then rung the stentorian voice of Red Dick.

"At them, you red devils! Cut them into pieces."

Rallying around their brave but wicked chief, the Dog Soldier Sioux, in spite of their deadly greeting, and fully relying upon the support of the Branded Brotherhood, rushed up the embankment, to be again and again driven back by the terrible fire poured upon them by the settlers.

Coolly, and with a cruel smile upon his lips, and deadly hatred in the glitter of his eyes, Ricardo, the chief, stood with folded arms, gazing upon the combat, unmoved by the scene of bloodshed his double treachery was causing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "Did Red Dick think I, Ricardo, chief of the Branded Brotherhood, would share a prize with him and his red hounds? Little does he know me!"

For some moments the fight continued, the red-skins encouraged by Red Dick and his conspicuous courage, fighting as seldom men fight in a bad cause, and then even Indian human nature could stand no more, for half of their number had fallen; yet no cheering cry came from the other side of the camp to show that Ricardo had attacked as he had promised.

Suddenly the tall form of a warrior glided to the side of Red Dick, and said a few words in a hasty and excited tone, and the renegade's voice rung out loud and clear:

"Back, warriors! to the water all of you, for the Branded Brotherhood have betrayed us, and are laughing at us now."

Red Dick spoke in the Sioux tongue, and well did his dusky braves understand him. Seized with a panic of fear, they rushed headlong into the water, uttering yells of terror and fear.

Then again was heard the ringing order from Ricardo's trumpet-like voice:

"Fire upon them, men! Kill every red hound."

Again the rifles of the Brotherhood flashed forth in livid flame, and between two fires the Sioux warriors melted away, and the river was stained dark with their blood, while only a few succeeded in reaching the other shore, and most of that number were bleeding from wounds received.

Among those few was Red Dick, and the rising moon showed upon his face a look of fiendish hatred and a thirst for revenge, a revenge which he intended to devote his life to accomplish, for at last he fully understood the deep treachery of his evil ally.

"Come, braves; we are outcasts now, and must back to our village; but the day of retribution shall come for Ricardo and his band of robbers, for they have slain our young men, robbed us of the spoils of battle, betrayed us to ruin and death, and brought wailing and sorrow into our wigwams. Come, warriors of the Sioux nation; we will go to our village."

No word in reply was uttered, but silently, like grim specters, the remnant of Red Dick's band of Dog Soldiers stole away across the moonlit prairie.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR LIFE AND FOR LOVE.

WHEN night settled down upon the emigrant encampment, there were a number of gloomy faces around the impromptu fortifications, and many, both men and women, were sorry that they had ever left their old homes in the Eastern country to seek new ones on the frontier.

Yet, though gloomy, and dreading evil, they were none the less determined to defend their lives and families unto the bitter end, and Major Conrad was glad to see that he could depend upon his command as brave men.

At length the Indians began the attack, and warming to their work, the emigrants grew less despondent, especially after they had several times driven back their red foes with considerable loss, and with no serious result to themselves.

But on crept the weary hours of the night, and one of the teamsters, who had once been an old hunter and trapper, crept out of the camp to reconnoiter, and returned with the evil tidings that the Indians had been reinforced by a large band that had just come up.

Then followed a long season of quiet, and the emigrants felt assured that their enemies were plotting some scheme of devilment against them, and they longed more than ever for the return of the Unknown Scout.

Suddenly there was a scene of commotion in the enemy's lines, rapid firing followed, and the emigrants believed that at last Deadly-Eye had returned and was attacking Red Dick and his villainous crew, with the band of Pawnee braves for whom he had gone in search.

But no! that loud and ringing halloo was not from Indian throats, but the hearty cheer of trained soldiers, and the next moment a dark and rapidly-moving mass was seen approaching, and the stern order was heard:

"We are friends; open the barrier!"

"La Clyde! Hurrah! hurrah!" went up from the delighted emigrants, and into the encampment dashed a score of troopers with Captain Percy La Clyde at their head. Warmly were the young officer and his men welcomed, and having listened to the plan of defense adopted by Major Conrad, and stationed his troopers at advantageous positions, the dragoon commander said:

"It is a mere accident I reached you, for after my leaving your train, day before yesterday, you changed your course to the southward."

"Yes; that traitor guide, Dick—or rather, Red Dick, as he is known in these parts—"

"What! was your guide the famous Red Dick? Now I know why he always seemed to avoid me," said Captain La Clyde, with surprise.

"Yes, he was Red Dick, the renegade leader of the Dog Soldier Sioux, I believe."

"Yes, they made him chief of their tribe, major; but what an escape you had, for in changing your course he was doubtless leading you into his hornets' nest."

"It is just what he was doing, and would have succeeded, had not my daughter and Howard Talbot been captured by a band of regular Sioux warriors, and rescued by Deadly-Eye, the Unknown Scout, who informed us of the character of our guide."

"Major Conrad, you surprise me; Miss Sibyl captured and also Howard Talbot?"

"Yes, captain; they had ridden ahead to look up a camping-ground, and—"

"And were captured by Sioux Indians?"

"Yes; five warriors, and four of them the Unknown Scout killed in rescuing Talbot and Sibyl."

"Strange indeed; and he it was who told you the character of Red Dick?"

"Yes, he exposed him publicly, and they would have had a knife encounter in camp, had not Sibyl interfered, and then the Scout drove the guide from the encampment, and an hour after Red Dick returned at the head of his Dog Soldiers."

"And what became of the Scout, major?"

"He swam the river, and ran the gauntlet of the Indian line most gallantly, that he might seek some friendly Indians and bring them to our aid."

"Major, I am more and more surprised, for let me tell you that the fellow they call Deadly-Eye does not stand well in military circles, as he puts at defiance both officers and soldiers, and some months ago ruthlessly shot down three soldiers who had been sent to arrest him for violating some order. But he has certainly served you well, and I have heard of a number of his noble deeds, and cannot easily connect them with other acts he is reported guilty of, but how are the ladies, major?"

"Stout-hearted as are the men; but come, we will go and see them, captain."

Leading the way, Major Conrad conducted the young officer toward the large ravine running back from the river, and here a motley sight met their gaze, for the women and children were huddled together in the bottom of the gulch, around several bright fires, and further down were closely packed the horses and cattle belonging to the train.

"Why, they are all as snug as bugs in a rug, major," laughed Captain La Clyde, and as the firelight fell full upon him, it displayed his handsome, graceful form, a little under six feet in height, and compactly built.

His face was exceedingly youthful, beardless, and the features handsome, the mouth and dark blue eyes indicating courage and determination.

Clad in the uniform of a captain of cavalry, and with his brown curling hair worn long, and a slouch hat and ostrich plume shading his face, Captain Percy La Clyde looked just what he was, a dashing, handsome, daring soldier, generous to a fault, and ever true in both love and hatred.

The only child of wealthy parents, he had preferred to lead a military life to one of idleness and dissipation, and after a successful career at West Point, had been ordered to the frontier, where he rapidly ascended the ladder of promotion on account of his courage and skill as an officer.

Four days before the caravan reached their encampment on the river, Captain La Clyde had joined them by order of the commandant at Fort Hays, to serve as an escort to the emigrants, and a guard until they were securely settled in their frontier homes, and a most pleasant duty had the young officer found that he was detailed upon, for he had fallen desperately in love with Sibyl Conrad, and felt that she was the bright star that was to guard his future destiny.

Bounding down into the ravine, he found a cordial welcome from all; but a shade swept over his face as he beheld Howard Talbot by the side of the maiden he loved.

Percy La Clyde had watched with jealous eye the regard of his rival for Sibyl, and in spite of the many seeming noble qualities possessed by the young man, and his almost universal popularity, he could not like him, and felt for him a distrust he could not overcome.

But then, this might have been on account of his jealous nature, for jealousy always exerts an evil influence upon the person of whom it takes possession.

Yet Sibyl greeted him in a friendly way, and so did Ruth Whitfield, who had always exhibited warm regard for the young soldier.

After a few words of comfort and hope to those around him, Percy La Clyde said:

"Well, ladies, we must now leave you, for every man must be at his post," and he looked toward Howard Talbot as he spoke; but that young man smiled sweetly, and replied:

"So I think, captain, and should the enemy seek to enter this ravine, I will defend it with my life, for I am stationed here to watch the river approach."

"You cannot even see the water, sir, from your present position; so I would advise that you do a sentinel's duty, as long as you represent one," and Captain La Clyde turned away, while Howard Talbot's face flushed with anger, and Sibyl felt that a storm was brewing, and that she was innocently the cause; but with a sigh, she consoled herself with the thought that she could not love everybody that loved her, and turned her thoughts upon another, one who was not then in the encampment, but whose return she confidently expected, for her faith in the promise of the Unknown Scout was unbroken.

Returning to the line of fortifications, Major Conrad and Captain La Clyde were surprised and startled by the sound of conflict going on in the enemy's lines, and for which they could not account, unless that the Unknown Scout had returned; but after a moment's attention to the sound, the young officer remarked:

"As I live, they are fighting among themselves—or pretending to, to put us off our guard."

Then all was silent once more, and slowly dragged the moments away, until Major Conrad began to nod with sleep, and feeling anxious about the river front, Percy La Clyde cautiously crept there and reconnoitered.

At first he believed all quiet and safe, but then his quick eye caught sight of a dark mass upon the water.

Closely he watched it, and he saw it slowly moving down upon the point near which he stood.

Bounding into the ravine, he startled Howard Talbot, who still remained by the side of Sibyl, with:

"Be good enough to request Major Conrad to send me thirty men to this point at once; but to create no alarm."

Howard Talbot was off at once to obey the order, although he did not like the tone in which the order was given; still he felt he had been negligent of his duty, and wished to repair it all in his power.

Ere five minutes had passed the men arrived, headed by Major Conrad, and Captain La Clyde remarked, quietly:

"We are to be attacked by water, it seems; but we have greatly the advantage, so I will only keep my troopers with me, major, and you can return with the remainder of the men, as the attack will doubtless be made at more than this point; and, major, as there is no need of a sentinel here now, perhaps you can find some other duty for Mr. Talbot."

Major Conrad and his men returned to their post, and Captain La Clyde was about to give the order to fire, when all were startled by the discharge of the Branded Brotherhood, which leveled so many of the Dog Soldiers to the ground.

"By heaven, we have friends near, when we little dreamed of it. Ha! it must be the Unknown Scout, who has kept his word. Ready, men; fire!"

After the order of the young officer, the troopers poured in a rapid fire with their repeating rifles, and Red Dick and his men found themselves under two fires, until, in dismay, they broke and rushed for safety into the river, as soon as the Indian warrior arrived with the news of the massacre of their companions.

Unable to account for the turn in their favor, or why, if friends, they did not make themselves known, Captain La Clyde was about to go outside of the fortifications for the purpose of discovery, when he observed a dark form crawling toward the water, and springing down the embankment, he seized him in his powerful arms, and dragged him back.

It was an Indian warrior, with a broken leg, and otherwise wounded; but, speaking the Sioux tongue fluently, the captain soon learned of him that Ricardo and his Branded Brotherhood were surrounding his encampment, and the treachery of the outlaw chief toward his red allies was also related.

"Well, it is dog eat dog, that's certain. Now that we have Ricardo and his band to fight, we must indeed defend more than our lives," and Percy La Clyde's brow grew dark with dread, for he knew the desperate courage of the Branded Brotherhood, and the awful fate that would fall upon Sibyl and the others, if taken.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEADLY-EYE TO THE RESCUE.

FULLY acquainted with the plan of Ricardo, after his treachery to Red Dick, Captain La Clyde went rapidly around the line and quietly told the men whom they were to fight as their foe, and begged them to steel their hearts against any thought of mercy, and to never yield one inch of ground, for the motto of the Branded Brotherhood was that men must die, and beauty and booty be considered lawful prizes.

Hardly had the young officer made the circuit, when a dark mass of moving horsemen was seen approaching, and a clear voice hailed,

"Well! what would you?" answered Percy La Clyde.

"We have defeated your enemies, and would warn you that we are friends, that you might not fire upon us," replied the same voice that hailed.

"We know no friends in the dark; if you are such as you represent, camp on the river until daylight; if you are enemies, we are ready for you," coolly shouted back Captain La Clyde.

"Charge!" was then yelled forth in the commanding voice of Ricardo, and like a fiery whirlwind the horsemen swept down upon the devoted defenders of the train.

"Throw no shots away, men! Fire!" cried Percy La Clyde, and a line of flame flashed forth from the wagons, and several of the Brotherhood and their horses went down; but from some cause or other the aim of the emigrants had been untrue, and the outlaws pressed fiercely on, filling the air with their discordant cries, every man yelling in his native tongue, until it seemed as if the very flends from below had burst forth for a gala night.

"Men, be cool; there are devils upon you now, and your aim must be true; you must kill, or all is lost," rung out in the clear tones of

Captain La Clyde and Major Conrad; and Howard Talbot, who had thrown off his air of indifference and nobly come to the front, also encouraged the men by voice and gesture.

Then rolled forth a ceaseless roar of firearms, the heavy rush of iron hoofs was heard, and the confused shouts of many voices filled the air, until it seemed the grove was filled with a band of devils holding high carnival.

But, unchecked, and with desperate daring and determination, the Brotherhood came on until they dashed their horses against the very line of breastworks, and then their weapons began to tell upon the emigrants, who broke from the fierce fire and fell back, to the horror of Percy La Clyde, who called forth in trumpet-voice, "Troopers! rally around your commander! Steady now! charge!"

Gallantly the soldiers did rally around their officer, and dashed forward with him to recover the ground lost by the emigrants; but already had Ricardo bounded on horseback over the barrier, and followed by a dozen of his daring horsemen, dashed at once upon the dismounted troopers, who, in a vain attempt to check his mad career, fell beneath the iron hoofs of the outlaws' horses.

"My God! it cannot be that all is lost!" cried Percy La Clyde, in dread, and then, drawing his sword, he shouted:

"Troopers, come on! Men, they are but a handful of murdering thieves; follow me, and drive them back!"

In vain his gallant example and clear commands.

In vain the order of Major Conrad, who, in a frenzy, strove to stay the torrent of defeat.

In vain the conspicuous courage of Howard Talbot.

Useless the stern discipline and bravery of the troopers; all, all was useless, for from some unaccountable reason, never understood, a panic had seized upon the settlers, brave men though they were, fighting for all they held dear on earth; rapidly they gave ground until two-score of the outlaws had secured a footing within the inclosure, and by the light of the waning moon, which made all around visible, Ricardo was forming his men for a desperate and final charge.

Then his clear voice was heard, giving his stern orders, but ere they could be obeyed, there was heard a wild and prolonged war-whoop that made the blood of all who heard it turn cold with dread, and then upon the moonlit scene dashed a single horseman, bounding over the barrier and whirling suddenly into the very midst of the band of outlaws.

"My God! the Unknown Scout!"

"Deadly-Eye!"

"The Scout, and alone!"

Such were the cries that were heard, as with lightning rapidity the daring horseman, with a revolver in each hand, made his shots ring forth with telling effect.

"No! not alone! hark!" cried a voice, and a rolling sound like muffled thunder was heard upon the prairie, and again the wild war-whoop of the Unknown Scout broke forth and was answered from two-score of throats by three hearty cheers.

"The troopers! the troopers!" shouted the outlaws, and hastily they turned to fly, Ricardo, with a bitter curse, first spurring toward the Unknown Scout, who wheeled to meet him.

But, as if thinking better of his intention, the outlaw suddenly checked his pace, and heading his splendid gray for the barrier, took it with a flying leap, and disappeared in pursuit of his men.

Instantly Deadly-Eye followed him, and the two were soon lost to sight upon the prairie in the opposite direction to that from which the cavalry squadron was approaching.

A moment more and they dashed up, headed by Major Belden, one of the senior officers of the fort.

"Major, I greet you; but though too late to join in the fun, you have scared off the enemy," and Percy La Clyde stepped forward and addressed Ernest Belden, a soldierly-looking man of forty, with a handsome, but dark, sinister face.

"Who were your foes, La Clyde?" asked the officer.

"We have had two sets, major; first the Dog Soldier Sioux, under that desperado, Red Dick, and then none other than Ricardo and his desparate band."

"A hard lot indeed, and you have been most fortunate to escape them, and I am glad to see that that reckless Scout told me truth; but where has he gone?" and the major turned to look for Deadly-Eye.

"Gone like mad after the outlaw chief; but will we not give pursuit, major?"

"No, Captain La Clyde, it would be useless, and I am now destined upon a raid upon the Sioux village to the northward, so will leave you as soon as day breaks, which will be soon."

A short while longer conversation continued, and then Captain La Clyde presented his superior to Major Conrad, and also to the ladies, who approached at that moment, and he could not but mark the start of surprised admiration that the major gave when he beheld the beauty of Sibyl Conrad.

Then followed the melancholy duty of caring for the wounded, and burying the dead, until, when the sun arose, it lighted up a sad scene, and the sound of the living wailing for those dear to them, who had fallen, filled the air.

After a hasty breakfast, Major Belden and his troopers departed, leaving Captain La Clyde, as before, to be an escort to the train. Hardly had the forms of the squadron disappeared over a roll in the prairie, when up dashed the Unknown Scout, his horse covered with foam, and showing every indication of a hard ride, as did also his rider, for his race was pale and wore a look of fatigue.

Yet his voice was calm and pleasant, as he replied, in acknowledgment to the cheers given him:

"I thank you, comrades; but I was almost too late, as I had far to ride ere I found aid for you, as the Pawnees had left their hunting-ground; fortunately I met Major Belden, and he was willing to believe me, and come to your succor."

Dismounting, Deadly-Eye devoted himself to the care of his horse, and then, after partaking of a hearty breakfast which Sibyl had prepared for him, threw himself down to rest, and at once was lost in deep and refreshing slumber, while Major Conrad and Captain La Clyde set about their arrangements for continuing their way on the following morning, for they were anxious to get settled in the spot that was to be the new home of the emigrants.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING AND DISCOVERY.

With the first glimmer of light in the eastern skies, the settlers were astir, and the bugle call to the troopers pierced through the motte.

The Unknown Scout and Prairie Gull appeared to have fully recovered from their hard trip of the past few days, and Deadly-Eye was ever on hand to render the slightest service to Sibyl, or any one else who desired his kind offices.

Between Captain La Clyde and the Unknown Scout a warm friendship had sprung up; for no longer did the young officer appear to have any doubts regarding the noble character of the man whom, in the past, he had both praised and abused.

As regarded Sibyl, she certainly exhibited a most kindly interest in the mysterious rover of the prairies, and with bitter sarcasm for lips so sweet, replied to Howard Talbot's derogatory remarks regarding the man who had certainly served them all so well.

But the fact is, Howard Talbot was deeply in love with Sibyl, and noticing that she most kindly regarded the man whose life was a romance and a mystery, he felt that he had a dangerous rival, and was determined not to yield one atom of any claim he held upon the affection of Sibyl Conrad.

Then again, Ruth Whitfield exhibited a sudden and marked interest in the unknown prairie-man; seemed most anxious to be even near him, and a shadow would cross her brow whenever Deadly-Eye would turn, with one of his fascinating smiles, and address her lively cousin, for Ruth had a fierce and jealous nature, and could look only unkindly upon one who crossed her path in rivalry.

Thus were matters taking a stormy turn and threatening equally weather to those concerned, for Percy La Clyde was jealous of Howard Talbot, who in turn hated the young officer, but was jealous of the Unknown Scout, in whom both Sibyl and Ruth were more deeply interested than they would admit, even to their own hearts.

At length the sun arose beyond the prairie, and slowly the long train of wagons filed out from the motte, with here and there a party on horseback, and took up their march further on toward the setting sun, leaving behind them, within their narrow beds of clay, those who had fallen in the battle the night before.

At the head of the train rode a small cavalcade, consisting of Deadly-Eye, Percy La Clyde, Major Conrad and the troopers.

The Unknown Scout was acting as a guide for the emigrants toward a point where he informed them, was one of the most fertile districts on the plains, well watered, and where a settlement would have every advantage that could be found on the frontier.

When Howard Talbot heard Deadly-Eye speak of the point he considered most favorable as a settlement, he instantly remarked that he intended riding on ahead for half a mile.

Arming himself thoroughly, and declining Gerald Conrad's offer to accompany him, the young pioneer set off, at first keeping only a short distance ahead, but gradually drawing away from the train, until, when the noonday halt was made, he was nowhere visible upon the prairie.

As if fully acquainted with the country, he put his horse at a rapid gallop, and continued on for miles, until a higher roll in the prairie gave him a view of the river through the green trees of a prairie island.

Toward this point he directed his course until he found himself upon a peninsula, made by the river making a grand curve.

On this point of land, entirely surrounded by water, excepting where it touched the open prairie, had been the home of Alfred Carter, who the night before had been ruthlessly murdered by the Branded Brotherhood.

A more delightful place could not have been chosen for a settlement, for the point, or the peninsula, contained fully five thousand acres of land, of the richest kind of soil, with here and there large timber mottes, and the river bounding it upon three sides, while to the eastward stretched the unbroken prairie for miles, to serve as a luxuriant pasture for stock.

As Howard Talbot rode along the trail leading toward the humble cabin home upon the river-bank, his brow wore a troubled look, and he glanced nervously around him.

Nearer and nearer he drew toward the cabin, but no lazy wreath of blue smoke curled up above the tree-tops, and all seemed strangely desolate around him.

Presently a dark form glided forth from the foliage bordering the trail, and stood directly in the pathway of the horseman, who suddenly reined his steed back with iron grasp as his eyes fell upon the person.

"Red Bud of the Forest, what do you here near the lonely home of the pale-face hunter?" said Howard Talbot, speaking in the language of the Pawnees.

"The Red Bud is a free child of the woods; she asks not the false pale-face brave whither she can go," haughtily replied the Indian girl.

"The Red Bud turns her eyes with anger upon me; have I offended her?"

"Yes; the Many-Faces has spoken with false tongue to the Red Bud of the Forest. Ere Many-Faces came to the wigwam of the Red Bud, she sung like a bird of the woods, and her heart was like the silvery river; her sorrows were light, only falling upon her as softly as the autumn leaves kiss the ground. But Many-Faces took away the joy of the Red Bud, and the wind sighs nightly in her heart. The Great Spirit frowns at the child of the woods, and the heart of the Indian maid is breaking, and the snow of winter will rest upon her bosom. Many-Faces has a false tongue, and a false light in his eyes, for he told the Red Bud he loved her; he took her from the wigwam of her people, and then left her alone to die. But the Great Spirit would not let her die then, but when she was worn down with hunger, when her feet would not press the earth, and the enemy of her people, the Sioux, would have danced around her scalp, the great white chief, who rides the prairie whirlwind, and whose eye ever looks death upon his foes, rescued her from her enemies and carried her back to her tribe."

"Was it the Unknown Scout that saved your life, girl?"

"Red Bud has spoken the truth; her tongue is not crooked; it was the strange Scout that carried her back to the Pawnee village, and he it was that told her that Many-Faces loved a maiden here by the running waters."

"Curses on that Scout! Did you come here to see that maiden?" said Howard Talbot, harshly.

"Red Bud has seen the Rose of the Woodland, and told her not to love Many-Faces."

"By Heaven, girl, you shall die for that!" cried the now aroused man, and he attempted to draw a pistol from his belt; but, ere he could do so, Red Bud had unslung a light rifle from her back, and covered him with deadly aim.

"Let not Many-Faces seek to slay the Paw-

nee girl, for she would not die by his hand. Her heart is broken, but she will not harm the pale-face chief who broke it. Let him go, and never cross the path of the Forest Red Bud more. Go; the Red Bud bids him go."

Still holding her aim upon his heart, the look of the brave girl proved she would kill him did he hesitate, and with a bitter curse Howard Talbot drove the spurs into the flanks of his horse and dashed away, leaving Red Bud watching him until he was out of sight.

A rapid ride of five minutes brought Howard Talbot to the cabin door of Alfred Carter; but oh! what a scene met his gaze!

Here and there were scattered numerous pieces of furniture and household effects; the strong door was broken from its hinges, and a scene of desolation was upon all, while bloodstains were upon the floor and ground.

There lay the body of the faithful watch-dog, who had died at his post, and a few chickens were roaming disconsolately around.

But nowhere visible were the occupants of the cabin, and the face of Howard Talbot turned pale with dread, as he quickly followed the trail where some heavy objects had been dragged, and a walk of a few hundred yards brought him to a thicket of small timber upon the riverbank, and there he beheld three new-made graves side by side.

"My God! Alfred Carter and all his family gone! No, there are but three graves, and they numbered four.

"Yes; Mrs. Carter, Rose, and her brother, lie here, and the father has escaped; or mayhap the father lies here, and Rose has been carried off into captivity. A sad, sad fate, poor girl; but yet it were better so, and death has saved me a world of trouble, for I wish not two women as rivals in the same settlement. Well, it cannot be helped, and now I am free to marry Sibyl Conrad, if that accursed Scout does not stand between us, and if he does, I must crush him."

With a hard look upon his handsome face, Howard Talbot returned to the cabin, glanced carefully around among the rubbish for a while, and then mounting his horse, rode rapidly away, and making a wide circuit upon the prairie, overtook the wagon-train just as it went into camp for the night, on the edge of the peninsula.

Riding on ahead, the Unknown Scout, accompanied by both Sibyl and Ruth, soon came upon the deserted and desolate cabin home of Alfred Carter, and with a cry of alarm, Deadly-Eye sprung from his horse and entered the little hut.

"All, all gone! In God's name, who has done this foul deed? By the blue heavens above us, I swear that they shall rue this accursed act!"

Never before had the cousins seen Deadly-Eye in any way moved by excitement; but now the look upon his face was terrible, and they almost feared him.

But controlling himself instantly, he said quietly:

"Miss Conrad, it is due to both yourself and Miss Whitfield that I make known to you the deed done here. In this cabin home dwelt a man by the name of Alfred Carter, and with him his wife, his daughter Rose—a beautiful girl—and his son. They had not an enemy in the world that I knew of; but, see here what a hellish deed has been committed!

Following the same trail that Howard Talbot had, Deadly-Eye soon came to the graves, and then, after examining most carefully the tracks and trails around, as well as he could in the dying light of day, he returned with the maidens to the encampment, and held a long conversation with Major Conrad and Captain La Clyde, who just then came up from a scout with his men.

"Major Conrad, this is the point I have deemed most favorable for your settlement," said Deadly-Eye, at the conclusion of his talk regarding the massacre of the Carter family.

"Here you will have every advantage, and be protected by the river, as you will see in the morning. And I would advise that you at once set about building a stockade fort and wall across this end of the point, and the river, being wide and deep, will protect you upon the three other sides. In a few days I will return and aid you all in my power; but as soon as the moon rises, I will take the trail of the hell-hounds who have brought ruin upon the peaceful family who dwelt here."

The Unknown Scout was as good as his word, for as soon as the moon arose and lighted up the prairie, he left the sleeping camp, and struck off over the plains, slowly following the trail of Ricardo and his band, after their deadly crime against poor Alfred Carter.

CHAPTER X.
PLOTTING MISCHIEF.

TEN days passed away after the arrival of the train in the new settlement, and the peninsula began to present a far different scene, for the settlers had also staked out their farms, chosen the sites of their cabin homes, and pitched their tents until their houses could be built.

No contention, no envy existed among them, and the future promised brightly, as the whole male force worked upon the stockade fort, which was to be the common center of protection for all.

Several days after their arrival Major Belden

Whether Howard Talbot had changed his love for Sibyl none knew, as he was ever pleasant toward her; but, certain it is that he appeared to relinquish in favor of the major, and suddenly became devoted to Ruth, who, in the absence of the Unknown Scout, was willing to accept the attentions of the young man.

The desolate cabin of Alfred Carter had become the home of Howard Talbot, with all its surroundings. The settlers having drawn lots for its possession, and he having been the lucky winner, he had at once installed himself in his new residence, at the same time intimating that,

me tell you to report at once, as he wants you to lead an expedition to the south."

"Indeed! Well, we will depart to-night."

"Pardon me, major, but General Canton bids me remain at the settlement until our friends have their cabins built and crops in, and I am to retain command of twenty of your men."

Major Belden frowned visibly at this news, and compressed his lips as though in anger; but he said nothing and walked off in search of Sibyl Conrad.

Soon he found her seated upon the river-bank, a book in one hand, a fishing-rod in the other.

"Well, Miss Sibyl, seeking food for both body



A DARK FORM GLIDED FORTH BORDERING THE TRAIL, AND STOOD DIRECTLY IN THE PATHWAY OF THE HORSEMAN.

and his troopers dashed into the new settlement and was greeted with pleasure by all, for the officer at once set his men to work aiding in building the stockade, and by many acts of kindness won the esteem of all the emigrants.

With this extra force the work went bravely on, and in two weeks' time the walls of the stockade went up, and the large cabin-fort was complete.

In those two weeks Major Belden had constantly haunted Sibyl Conrad with his presence, and the maiden's kindness toward him he construed into a reciprocity of his affection, and commenced building up hopes of making her his wife.

ere long, he hoped to have a housekeeper to look after his affairs.

Thus glided away the days at the peninsula settlement, or "Riverside," as the settlers had named it, and still the Unknown Scout remained absent.

One evening, the day prior to the departure of Major Belden to the fort, whither he had ordered Captain La Clyde, the morning after his arrival in the settlement, that he might have no rivals in camp, the young cavalry officer suddenly rode up, followed by half a dozen dragoons.

"Well, La Clyde, what news from the fort?"

"Stirring times, major, and the general bids

and mind, I see," he remarked, pleasantly, as he walked up.

"Yes, sir, and both are the most agreeable occupations I could be engaged in."

"Indeed; I thought that you would be at least glad to see me, as I leave you to-morrow, or rather to-night, having been ordered to the fort to command a most dangerous expedition," and the officer gazed down into the beautiful upturned face to mark the effect of his words.

But Sibyl quietly replied:

"It is the glory of a soldier's life to participate in dangerous service; so I have been told."

"True, Miss Sibyl, and it is a soldier's duty to love, and also his pleasure, as I may safely

say, for dearly do I love you. Pardon me, Sibyl, for thus abruptly speaking of this, to me, most important subject, but to-night I leave you upon a service from which I may never return, and if I fall, I would have you to know that I loved you more than all else in this world. If my life is spared, then, Sibyl, I beg you promise me to one day be my wife."

Major Belden had spoken earnestly, and apparently with deep feeling, but, neither his words nor manner had touched the heart of Sibyl Conrad, who, rising from the bank, replied:

"Major Belden, you surprise and pain me by your words, for I have no love to give you, and never can have, though I shall ever regard you most kindly as a friend."

"Curse your friendship, Sibyl Conrad!" hissed forth the humiliated and disappointed man, and, wheeling quickly, he strode from the spot, leaving the maiden more surprised by this new phase in his character than by his declaration of love.

A half-hour more and Major Belden rode forth from the settlement, his brow dark and lips compressed with internal emotion.

As he reached the edge of the prairie he suddenly came upon Howard Talbot, and bidding his men ride slowly on, he called to the young man, and when they halted side by side he said:

"Mr. Talbot, can I ask if you had a rival what would be your course with him?"

Howard looked surprised, but replied almost fiercely:

"I would overreach him by fair or foul means, even were he my brother!"

"We think alike, Mr. Talbot. Now, let me ask you what regard you have for that prairie rover known as Deadly-Eye?"

"None whatever, sir."

"Well, he is my rival."

"Then court-martial him for the crimes it is said he has committed, and hang him to the nearest tree."

"Good advice, sir, and I will follow it; Mr. Talbot, it will give me pleasure to see you at the fort as my guest, and I think together we can overreach the Unknown Scout. Good-day, sir."

"Good-day, Major Belden."

On dashed the major, and with a strange smile upon his face, Howard Talbot rode on, muttering to himself:

"Yes, he sees I do not like the Unknown Scout, and I will use him as a tool to rid me of my dangerous rival, for that Sibyl loves him I know. Then, my gallant major, when you have removed the scout from my path, I'll devote my attention to you and that handsome captain, for all that cross my love-trail must die, and arrow or rifle-shot from the cover of a motte will easily make those two officers food for wolves. Now I must go on and improve my time with the lovely Sibyl, who is the cause of so much mischief," and putting spurs to his horse he dashed on, to find upon his arrival at the stockade that the coast was not wholly clear, for the handsome face and form of Percy La Clyde was visible, sitting by the side of Sibyl Conrad.

With a smothered curse, Howard Talbot turned away, and the next moment met Ruth Whitfield with one of his sweetest smiles.

"Well, Talbot, one of your rivals has just gone," said Ruth, with a malicious smile.

"True, and left another even more dangerous; but, it is the Unknown Scout that I fear in that quarter most."

"Yes, and it is he that I fear will be lost to me through her artful ways."

"Leave that to me, Ruth Whitfield, as I have before told you. You and I understand each other thoroughly. I love Sibyl Conrad, and you love Deadly-Eye; now we will plot that he be removed out of the way until I can marry her, and—"

"But no harm must befall him, Talbot, or you will find me revengeful," sternly said the maiden.

"Leave that to me; he shall be captured and taken to a distant tribe of Indians, whom I know well, and held there until I marry Sibyl, and then he shall be allowed to escape, and it will depend upon you whether or not you become his wife."

"She will not marry you if she believes him alive."

"No; he must be reputed dead, and that I will arrange; so give yourself no fear on that score."

"I cannot help it, Talbot. Do you know that love for that man has altered my entire nature, and I would take life if it stood between him and me?" and the glitter of Ruth Whitfield's eyes proved that she spoke the truth.

"No need of that; all will come right in the end; only be my strong ally in all I ask you to do."

"I will say black is white if it but gains my ends," recklessly said the handsome, but love-maddened woman, as she arose and walked toward her aunt who was approaching.

"Well, I am playing a deep game, but I will win her. Yet I do not like her talking of revenge if harm befall Deadly-Eye; but I must risk her vengeance, and I will be willing to, after I make Sibyl my wife. I can lie to Ruth and say that an Indian killed the Scout to revenge himself for the death of some of his kindred whom Deadly-Eye had slain. Yes, all will come right; it must come right, or I am ruined, and Many-Faces, as the Indians call me, will have to pass in his checks, or get out of this prairie country."

CHAPTER XI.

BEARDED IN HIS DEN.

In his private quarters of the fort sat General Canton, the commandant of the chain of forts upon the far frontier.

He was engaged in reading dispatches just arrived, and his brow was dark, his look troubled, as though the news therein contained was not pleasant.

Around the general were signs of comfort, and even luxury, for that Far-Western post, for his quarters were well furnished, and books and musical instruments were there with which pleasantly to while away leisure moments.

Touching a small bell, an orderly soon appeared at the door.

"See if Major Belden is sufficiently recovered from his fatiguing trip to come to me."

"Yes, sir," and the orderly disappeared to return in a few moments with the information that the major would come at once.

Soon after the major put in an appearance at the general's quarters, and was motioned to a seat.

"Major, I am really pleased with your trip, and I feel certain that those Indians on the Southern Agency will behave, at least for a few months; but I have sent for you to learn what was the information you had regarding that desperado known as Deadly-Eye?"

"I have information that should hang him, sir; for years he has led a wild and reckless life, coming from none knew where, and to this day not a man on the frontier knows his home, or the mystery that surrounds him."

"He has committed several murders, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; he shot two soldiers a year or two since, and what for Heaven only knows. He has shot down Indians by the score, and I believe is in league with some of the hostile bands, also with the Branded Brotherhood."

"Yet he has done a number of noble deeds, I have heard."

"They have had that appearance, general; but, there has been some underhand reason for it, I assure you. Now, on my return from the southward, as I told you this morning, I passed by the new settlement of Riverside, to see if they longer needed the services of Captain La Clyde, and all of a sudden the Unknown Scout appeared, after an absence of four weeks on some pretended trail, and demanded that I should let him have a dozen soldiers to accompany him upon some trip, which he pretended would rescue a young girl from captivity. I considered it some trap to lead my men into, and told him so, when he deliberately knocked me down. See, sir, here is the bruise on my left cheek."

"He was most impudent and daring, major."

"Yes, general; and I arose and rushed upon him with my sword, when, as quick as a flash, he wrested it from my grasp, broke it, and hurled me from him with a strength I believed no man capable of."

"The daring desperado! What did you then, major?"

"I ordered the men to seize him, but he hurled them aside, drew his revolvers and strode right through their line, and I then ordered them to fire upon him, but Captain La Clyde, half a dozen of the settlers and Miss Conrad threw themselves in front of him, and the troopers could not obey, and, mounting his horse, the coward rode away."

"Not a coward, major; he is certainly not that, bad as he is," said the general.

"Yes, sir, he is a coward."

"And you are a liar, Major Belden!"

The sudden reply, breaking into the conversation in a stern, deep voice, caused both General

Canton and his officer to spring to their feet and glance toward the door.

There, just inside the portal, stood none other than Deadly-Eye, the Unknown Scout, his eyes blazing, and fixed upon Major Belden with a menacing light.

"What! ho! the guard! orderly!" yelled the startled officer, and again the deep voice of the Scout was heard.

"There stands one outside that door who would give up his life at my word, so you call in vain. One cry more from your lips and you are a dead man."

Then, turning to the commander, the Scout continued:

"General Canton, I did not come here, sir, to beard the lion in his den, but to meet you face to face as man to man, and give the lie to all that has been said against me, sir. Will you spare me a moment of your time?"

"With a revolver staring me in the face, sir, I see no choice, did I decide otherwise," replied the general, with perfect coolness.

"I will lower my weapon, sir; but, by the God above if any motion to betray me is made, I will slay the man that attempts it. I came here voluntarily, to say that never have I raised a hand against the United States troops on this border, who did not first attack me."

"You slew two soldiers who once attempted your arrest, I learn."

"I slew two drunken soldiers who had boasted that they would take me alive and hang me without trial; they rushed upon me without orders from their officers. I warned them back; they would not heed the warning, and I shot them dead. You were not in command here then, sir, and heard only a garbled account of the affair from such as yonder man, who wears a major's straps, which I will yet tear from his shoulders if he crosses my path with evil intent."

"You speak boldly, Sir Scout."

"I know it, general; it is a habit I have. Regarding my killing of peaceable Indians, it is all a lie, though I make war upon all hostile bands. Now, sir, I desire to state why I sought you here: first to give the lie to all assertions against me such as have been brought to your ears, and then to say that upon arriving at the new settlement, whither I guided the Conrad emigrant-train, I saw with horror that a cruel enemy had been there, and left ruin and death behind, for Alfred Carter, his wife and son had been murdered, and his daughter, a beautiful girl of eighteen, had been carried off into captivity. Taking the trail of the bloodhounds, after days of tedious work, I tracked them to their kennel, and found that Ricardo, the chief of the Branded Brotherhood, had done the deed."

"Infamous!"

"Well may you say so, General Canton; but, to continue: I tracked the renegades to their den, three days' journey from here, and for over two weeks endeavored in some way to get possession of the maiden, but in vain. At length, however, I disguised myself, and by night entered the stronghold, and sought the cabin where the young lady was held a prisoner."

"You were most daring, sir."

The scout smiled quietly, and replied:

"I risk my life every day, general. From Rose Carter I learned that Ricardo was off on another raid, and only a few of his men were in camp; also that she was too ill to then leave; so I returned to the settlement, and meeting there Major Belden, begged for a few men to return with me. He refused, and insulted me, and I promptly knocked him down."

"Served him right," responded General Canton, who, astonished at the magnificent appearance and noble face of the man whom all called a desperado, and won over by his bold daring and frank manner, was rapidly leaning to his side. Before, he had believed the Unknown Scout some burly outlaw, a brute in appearance and acts.

"Thank you, general. I then left the settlement by forcing my way through the soldiers; and, returning to the outlaw stronghold, succeeded in effecting the escape of Rose Carter, who was greatly improved in health by the thought of leaving Ricardo's hated presence."

"She is free, then?"

"Yes, general; she is now in this fort, whether I brought her, half an hour since, for we were hotly pursued by the Branded Brotherhood."

"The deuce you were! Well, I will lead my men at once against them," said the commandant, eagerly.

"Hold, general! I have already seen Captain La Clyde, and, by this time, he has a troop ready. It was through his kindness I found

you here, and the orderly outside of your door is a man whose life I have twice saved, and he bade me enter and clear my character, which Major Belden was defaming. Now, general, if you will just give an order to see that poor Miss Carter is comfortably looked after, I will guide you in pursuit of Ricardo and his men."

"Miss Carter shall be the guest of my wife, Sir Scout, and I will at once follow you. Major Belden, you have, for some reason, I am certain, misrepresented this man's character to me, sir, for I am confident he speaks the truth. Be more careful in future, and until my return hold command of the fort. Come, Scout."

So saying, the general walked from his quarters out into the court of the fort, where Captain La Clyde's troop of horse was drawn up ready for the march.

Presenting the general to Rose Carter, whose beautiful face was most sad looking and pale with fatigue, the kind officer at once conducted her to the apartments of his wife, and returning soon after mounted his horse, and with the Unknown Scout by his side, and Percy La Clyde and his troop following, dashed rapidly away from the fort, leaving the crestfallen major swearing hatred and revenge upon all who crossed him, from the general down to the drummer boy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BATTLE WITH THE BROTHERHOOD.

DASHING rapidly on, under the guidance of the Unknown Scout, the squadron of cavalry, after a ride of ten miles, struck the trail where Ricardo and his men had turned back in their chase after the two fugitives.

After carefully examining the traces, Deadly-Eye reported the outlaws about thirty strong, and with a cheer the troopers dashed on, until the Unknown Scout suddenly drew rein, where a large trail was visible.

"Here is another trail of fully a hundred horsemen, and they have followed on after Ricardo. Ah! I have it, they are the band of Dog Soldier Sioux under the desperate Red Dick. General, can I offer some advice?"

"Assuredly, Scout. Our success in this affair depends upon you."

"Well, sir, I would say dispatch half a dozen men at once to the fort for another squadron of horse, so that we can be able to manage both of these bands, and follow Ricardo to his retreat."

"Good! we'll make a ten-strike of him this time, and it will be a feather in our cap to rid the country of such a desperate renegade. Lieutenant Ainslie, take four men with you, return to the fort, and tell Captain Cassidy to come on at utmost speed with his company, and see also that you bring fresh horses and rations."

Away darted the lieutenant, while a halt was called, and the horses were allowed to rest, but the Unknown Scout determined to push on at once, alone, and reconnoiter; so, telling the general he would return if he discovered the exact whereabouts of the enemy, he rode away, and soon disappeared behind a roll in the prairie.

For a few miles Deadly-Eye continued on, Prairie Gull creeping up steadily, in a sweeping and untiring gallop; then he suddenly drew rein, for the distant crack of a rifle broke on his ear.

Cautiously advancing, Deadly-Eye soon reached a roll of the prairie higher than ordinary, and, knowing that he could obtain an extensive view from its summit, he dismounted, and leaving Prairie Gull to await him, he advanced until he could see for miles before him.

Then, quite to his surprise, he beheld a small timber-island, and around it, just out of rifle-range, were fully two hundred Indians.

Taking a small field-glass from his pocket, he soon discovered that the timber hid a number of horsemen, who had taken refuge from their Indian foes.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, as he turned his glass upon the Indian besieging-party. "Aha! Ricardo; you are in a trap, and Red Dick holds the winning hand. Well, so much the better for the troops. Ah! Ricardo, your days are numbered now, and mine must be the hand to tear from you your worthless life."

After a long examination of the motte and the surrounding band, the Scout returned to his horse, mounted and rode rapidly back, arriving at the cavalry encampment just as Captain Cassidy and Lieutenant Ainslie arrived with about sixty more men.

Reporting his discovery to the general, Deadly-Eye continued:

"And now, sir, I think as soon as the horses are a little rested we had better push on. You

have a hundred fighting men now, and we can defeat the two forces combined."

"You do not think the two men, now enemies, will join against us, do you, Scout?"

"I do, general; the necks of both men are in the hangman's noose, and, knowing that they cannot singly meet your force, they will join their thieving bands and make common war upon us."

"Well, we'll give them a supper of cold lead and steel by dark. Come, gentlemen, we must be on the move."

On swept the cavalcade over the prairie, and when the sun was low in the horizon they came up to the higher roll of the prairie, where a short halt was ordered.

"They are at it, hot and fast," said the Scout, as the sound of rapid firing reached their ears.

"Now, general, let me suggest that you divide the troops into three parties, you leading the center with about forty men, Captain La Clyde taking the right with about twenty-five men, Captain Cassidy the left with a like number, and at about a mile distant from Captain La Clyde. With your permission I will then take the remaining half-dozen troopers and the three hunters, and making a circuit of four miles will come out upon the prairie at a point far to your right, and at once advance toward the motte. When the Indians catch sight of me they will at once send out a large force to fight me, and then you had better charge with your three squadrons."

"Splendidly planned, Scout; you should have entered the army!" cried the general, and he at once gave the necessary orders, and in ten minutes more, with the roll of the prairie still hiding them, the four parties were taking up their respective positions.

From their points of view the officers then saw Deadly-Eye suddenly emerge upon the prairie. At once his presence created an excitement in the Indian besieging ranks.

But boldly on rode a party to meet and give them battle, while their main attack upon the motte did not cease in vigor.

Rapidly the two parties approached each other—the Indians surprised at the boldness of the little band. Then broke forth across the prairie the wild and thrilling war-cry of the Unknown Scout, and over the roll of land, from three differing points, bounded the cavalry squadrons, their regular cheers striking terror to the dusky besiegers of the motte.

Instantly there was a cessation of hostilities between the Indians and Branded Brotherhood, and out from the motte bounded the iron-gray of the outlaw chief, his master upon his back, and, waving a white handkerchief, he approached a central point from whence another horseman emerged to meet him.

Presently the two met upon the plain; the parley between them was excited and brief, and Ricardo returned to his motte, and Red Dick to his Indians, who at once broke in wild confusion and made for the motte.

"It is as I thought; they have joined forces," cried the Scout, and raising his voice to its highest pitch he sent it across the prairie in one of his terrible war-cries.

"Ride, men, ride! Press them into their den! Press them home and the game is ours!"

A cheer answered the Scout's words, and driving their spurs into their horses, the troopers bounded on in hot pursuit, closing up upon their foes in deadly earnest.

At length the band of Indians, under Red Dick, reached the motte, and rallying around the nearest trees, turned to fire upon the advancing cavalry, the stern voice of Ricardo giving forth his orders in a cool and decided manner.

But the Scout gave them no time to form a solid line, for, ahead of the other three squadrons, he dashed on with his little band right into the timber, and instantly a hot firing was heard.

Almost immediately after, the squadron of Percy La Clyde struck the timber, then followed the general and Captain Cassidy and their troopers.

Attacked thus from four points, and without time to rally, the Indians broke and fled, in spite of the cries of Red Dick and Ricardo, who were determined to sell their lives dearly.

Through the motte like a fiery torrent swept the Unknown Scout and his band, crushing down many an Indian brave, and driving a mass of Indians pell-mell before his impetuous advance.

On, on, right for the spot where Ricardo coolly sat his horse, Red Dick, Long Dave, and Red Burke upon either hand, and his disciplined outlaws around him, determined to do or die.

"Here, accursed hound, you are my game,"

yelled the Unknown Scout, firing his revolvers right and left, and dropping a foe at every shot, as he urged his horse on toward Ricardo.

But though the Indians had broken upon every hand, and were flying madly through the timber, shot and cut ruthlessly down by the charging troopers, the brave band of the Branded Brotherhood still stood as firm as a rock, and met the attack with iron nerve.

Suddenly a tall trooper fell from his horse by the side of Deadly-Eye, and instantly his saber was seized by the Scout, who, with a series of wild war-cries, still pressed on toward Ricardo.

But, ere he reached the chief, Red Dick spurred forward to meet him, crying in his hoarse tones:

"Now, you cursed Scout, your time has come."

"You lie, Red Dick, you lie!" fairly shrieked Deadly-Eye, and with one mighty sweep of his saber he cut down through the neck and breast of the burly ruffian, crying:

"Take my second mark, Red Dick, though it cheats the gallows of its due."

Quickly supporting the band of the Scout came Percy La Clyde and his troopers, and the moment after, up dashed General Canton and half a dozen men, he having dispatched the remainder of his squadron, under Lieutenant Ainslie, and Captain Cassidy and his dragoons, in pursuit of the flying Indians.

The reinforcements, thus received by Deadly-Eye, caused the Branded Brotherhood to be outnumbered, and slowly they began to give ground.

Then, as if maddened because he could not break their ranks, Deadly-Eye bounded forward once more, and his saber having been broken by coming in contact with the rifle of Long Dave, he drew his keen knife, and with desperate thrusts of his cruel spurs, forced Prairie Gull forward until he faced Ricardo.

"Now, Captain Carleton, it is your life or mine!"

"In Satan's name, who are you that knows me?" cried the outlaw chief, his face turning ghastly pale, as he reined back his iron gray mare upon her haunches.

"I am one who has tracked you for years. I am the son of Nellie Carleton!" almost shrieked the Scout.

"Great God!"

As the outlaw chief uttered the cry, his reins fell from his nerveless hand, and his mare would have bounded away, had not Deadly-Eye seized the bridle and hurled her back with cruel force, while spurring still nearer to his enemy, he raised his glittering knife and drove it deep into the bosom of the man whose life he had sworn to.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Unknown Scout, as, with a smothered cry, the chief fell to the ground. Bending over the prostrate form the next instant Deadly-Eye seized Red Burke in his powerful arms, and dragged him from the saddle.

"Here, La Clyde, this fellow shall not cheat the gallows," he cried, and two troopers instantly seized the ruffian, while the remainder of the outlaws broke in wild confusion, and darted away to seek safety in flight.

But avenging foes were upon their track, and ere darkness settled upon the scene, many had fallen beneath the pistols and sabers of the troopers.

At length night came on, and the sounds of suffering were heard in the motte, for around a large camp-fire the troopers had placed the wounded.

At another fire, near by, stood General Canton and his officers, discussing the battle, and wondering at the absence of Deadly-Eye, who, when last seen, was in hot pursuit of the flying renegades.

But the night crept on, midnight rolled around, and yet the Unknown Scout came not, and anxious fears filled the hearts of all regarding his safety.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STARTLING REVELATION.

In that motte, there on the wild plain, few cared to seek sleep, with the dead and wounded everywhere around them. General Canton and his officers still sat around the camp-fire, though midnight had come and gone.

Presently the sound of rapidly advancing hoof-beats was heard, the sentinel challenged, and the answer came in the stern, deep voice of the Unknown Scout.

The next instant he dashed up to the fire, accompanied by another horseman, the negro Buttermilk, the servant of Ricardo.

"Thank God you have come, Scout. We feared danger had befallen you," cried the general.

"No, sir; I took the trail of this negro, and I caught him. Where is the body of Ricardo?"

"Lying where he fell, I suppose."

Walking hastily away into the timber, the Scout soon hailed:

"Send me a few men; the chief is not dead."

A few minutes more, and half a dozen troopers approached the fire, bearing between them the wounded form of Ricardo, the chief of the Brotherhood.

"Gently, men, gently! do you not hear his groans, and he is no man to cry out at trifles. Lay him there," said Deadly-Eye, and around the wounded chieftain gathered General Canton, the Scout, Captain La Clyde, the negro Butter-milk, and several others.

"Ricardo Carleton, do you know that you are dying?" suddenly asked Deadly-Eye, in an earnest tone.

"Yes; my sands of life are ebbing out rapidly; but who are you that calls my name—a name that has been dead to sound for long, long years?" replied the chief, speaking with difficulty, and turning his eyes upon the Scout.

"I will tell you, and you must say whether I speak true or not."

"I am listening; hasten, for death keeps back at the bidding of no man."

After a moment's silence, Deadly Eye began speaking in a low but distinct voice, plainly heard by all.

"Nearly thirty years ago there were two brothers, sons of wealthy parents, living on the Missouri river. One of these brothers in his eighteenth year, left his home to serve in the army of his country, and his brother, two years his senior, remained at home with his parents, who also had taken under their guardianship a young maiden of sixteen—a beautiful girl and an heiress. Between the elder brother and the maiden a warm feeling of love sprung up, and ere long they became engaged to be married.

"About that time, the soldier brother—a handsome, dashing fellow and gallant soldier—returned home on a leave of absence, and at sight, loved the maiden who was the promised wife of the brother. Maddened by his love, and jealous of his brother, he told the young lady she should never wed any man but himself, and frightened by his threats, she consented to put her marriage off with his brother. Convinced that she would keep her word, the soldier left on a visit to New Orleans, and once from under his influence, the maiden confessed to her lover and guardians the promise made under compulsion, for she feared the reckless soldier would slay his brother. Instantly it was arranged that the lovers should be at once married and depart for a home in some distant State; and it was done.

"In the far West the young couple found a home, and for two years were happy, for a young son was born to them, and—"

"Good God! who are you that haunts me with these specters of the past?" groaned the wounded chief.

"Wait, and you shall know. My knife-blow was a deadly one, but, Ricardo Carleton, you will not die until you have heard what I have to say."

"Then a shadow darkened the home in the West, for, in the absence of the husband and father, the cruel brother found out the quiet abode, insulted the loving wife with disgraceful proposals, and finding his influence over her gone, went mad with rage, and drove a knife to her heart.

"Flying from the hated spot, he dealt another severe blow upon his only brother by carrying with him the child, and placing it in the keeping of some friend of his, saying it was his own."

"Returning to his command, with his hellish secret locked up in his own heart, as he believed, he soon was guilty of winning the affection of a young girl, the daughter of a brother officer stationed in the same fort with him.

"Dishonoring her, for he cared not for the young girl, his crime was found out, and the almost heart-broken father sought revenge for the disgrace upon his child, and was slain in a duel at the hands of the man who had already brought untold sorrow upon him.

"Dismissed from the service, Ricardo Carleton then leagued himself with robbers, roaming over the western and south-western plains for years, until at length he became the leader of the Branded Brotherhood. Have I truly told your life, Ricardo?"

"You know all," sadly replied the chief, and

then he continued: "What became of my brother, and his child? for it was stolen from the person I left it with."

"After several years your almost broken-hearted brother married a young girl who had nursed him through the long illness that followed his discovery of the death of his wife; and, convinced in his own mind that you had done the foul deed, though he would not betray you, he took the maiden name of his wife, which was that of Carter, and moved still further into the western wilds, until a few years ago he settled not very far from here; and Alfred Carter, the man whom you slew, whose second wife you murdered, whose son fell by your hand, and whose daughter you carried in captivity to your stronghold, intending to make her your victim, was your brother, your own kindred."

"Oh, God! what a judgment has overtaken me!"

"I rescued Rose Carter from your power, and I have brought upon you your ruin."

"Who are you, fiend of Satan, who are you?" almost shrieked the chief.

"I will tell you. You carried me, for I was the little son of your brother, to one whom you deemed your friend. At that time the man was your very slave, but, in a fit of anger, you one day struck him, and kicked from your path his little child, and he hated you, for that kick proved fatal. From that day I was trained up to know and hate you too, until my kind benefactor and his wife, for they were kind, notwithstanding the evil lives they led as your agent for the sale of stolen goods, moved to the East, to live on the money they had accumulated.

"In an eastern State I lived until my eighteenth year, receiving the best education that money could bestow, and then my adopted parents lost their lives in a collision upon a railroad, and I was left alone, with a few thousand dollars they still had left.

"From papers in the possession of your enemy, I found out all that I would know, and westward I came, and devoted my life to becoming a thorough scout and plainsman, and that I succeeded you can well judge.

"Determined to track you to the bitter end, and slay you for the murder of my mother, I followed you across the prairies by day and by night, to, in the end, find that you had become the slayer of my father, my stepmother and brother, had dragged my half-sister to your den to bring dishonor upon her.

"Nay, Ricardo Carleton, I have more to say, for I would have you know that the young girl whom you brought ruin upon, and whose father you slew, went forth in the world with her babe, and ere many years became the wife of a horrid brute—one whom this night I sent to his long account, and who once before I marked, when years ago he attacked me for interfering when he was beating that poor, lonely woman.

"He had settled himself not far from Kansas City, and one night I stopped at his cabin, and then it was, in a fit of anger, he struck the woman whose life you had wrecked.

"Infuriated with my interference, he the next day, killed the sorrowing woman, and fled to these wilds, to soon become known as a desperado and renegade from his people, the leader of a band of thieving, murdering Dog Soldier Sioux.

"The son, whose life you dishonored, was cast upon the world, and living at one time among the Indians, at another in the cities, earning at all times a precarious living, he grew to manhood, a fit heir to his father's crimes, for only this night, from your negro servant, who from boyhood to manhood has followed you, and participated in many of your evil deeds, did I find out really who that son was, although a suspicion of the truth has of late flashed over me; and now hear me, Ricardo Carleton. As I tracked you to death so will I hunt down your son, for he has committed against one whom I love a deadly sin, one who took care of me when wounded and sick I laid for weeks in an Indian wigwam."

Without another word the Scout arose and walked away from the camp-fire, and only the groans of the chief broke the silence; but, whether most from pain of body or mind none knew, for he never spoke again, and with his head supported in the arms of the negro, Butter-milk, who had so faithfully followed his master's evil fortunes, his breath grew shorter and more labored, until, with a curse half uttered upon his lips, Ricardo, the chief of the Branded Brotherhood, was dead.

CHAPTER XIV. THE DUEL ON THE PRAIRIE.

WHEN the Unknown Scout, now also known to the reader under his real name of Alfred

Carleton, left the camp-fire and his dying uncle, he mounted Prairie Gull and rode away across the prairie.

Shortly after sunrise he beheld a single horseman approaching, and upon a nearer view discovered him to be none other than Howard Talbot.

A cruel light flashed in the deer-like eyes of the Scout as he recognized the horseman, and, putting Prairie Gull into a rapid gallop, he started toward him.

Whether it was a guilty conscience of intending wrong to the Scout, or fear, we cannot tell, but Howard Talbot instantly turned to fly, when the Scout at once urged his horse forward in pursuit.

Across the rolling prairie Howard Talbot urged his steed, and heading for a piece of timber soon disappeared in its leafy recesses.

"Ha! he has taken cover and intends to fight me! So be it," said the Scout, and the next instant a look of disappointment was upon his face, for he suddenly saw the fugitive dart out on the other side of the motte and continue on across the prairie.

The next moment Prairie Gull had reached the timber and was circling around it, when, suddenly, a shrill call was heard, and, glancing into the thicket, Deadly-Eye beheld the Red Bud of the Forest, just preparing to mount her white mare which stood near.

Instantly he wheeled alongside of the maiden, and in surprise, asked:

"What does the Red Bud here alone?"

"She came to seek the Stranger Scout. Yonder goes the enemy of Deadly-Eye—the man who taught the Rose of the Pawnees to love him—the man of many faces."

"Yes, I am now on his trail, Red Bud, for I would take his life, for did he not try to destroy the Pawnee maiden, and was she not ever kind to me when I lay sick and wounded in her wigwam? The Scout has a heart and has not forgotten. But, why did you seek me?"

"The Red Bud came to warn the great Scout that Many-Faces was his enemy who would strike him in the back, for Red Bud heard the words of the wicked man and the warrior from the great fort."

"Ha! that must have been Major Belden."

"The great Scout speaks straight; the two wicked braves were to kill Deadly-Eye, and the Many-Faces was to make one of the pale-face maidens his squaw."

"This is news, Red Bud, and I thank you for it. Now I must be off after yonder running hound. Come!"

Away darted Prairie Gull, and close behind followed the steed of the Red Bud.

But gradually, the trained and swift horse began to draw away from his less fleet companion, and once more, with tremendous strides, he was drawing nearer the magnificent animal ridden by Howard Talbot.

Thus an hour passed, and Prairie Gull was not a hundred feet behind the fugitive, while two miles distant upon the prairie came Red Bud, urging her white mare forward at the top of her speed.

With his repeating rifle Deadly-Eye could have brought down both horse and rider, but he cared not to do either; as that would have ended the affair too soon.

A few more tremendous bounds, and Howard Talbot saw his pursuer almost upon him, and drawing a pistol he opened a rapid but harmless fire upon him.

Instantly Deadly-Eye seized his lasso, which hung at the saddle-bow, and which he had learned to throw upon the southern prairies with wondrous skill. It made a sweep around his head. With a cry of horror, Howard Talbot saw it coming, and endeavored to dodge the fatal noose.

Too late! Like a lightning-flash it settled around him, and he was jerked violently from his saddle.

Instantly Deadly-Eye dismounted, and loosening the lariat from around his enemy's waist, bade him rise.

"What means this, sir?" sternly asked Howard Talbot, as he slowly rose to his feet.

"It means, sir, that I have pursued you to take your life, or lose mine in the attempt."

"And why, may I ask?"

"First, sir, because you are the son of the man I hate because he slew my mother, my father, and others dear to me."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply, that you know, as well as I do, that you are the illegitimate son of Ricardo Carleton, though you are not to blame for your birth."

A flush stole over the pale face of Howard Talbot, and he was silent.

"Whether you know that Ricardo, the chief of the Branded Brotherhood, was your father, or whether you are ignorant of it, I am not assured; but, such is the case, and you are a fit son for such a father, for under numerous disguises, you have led a most villainous life, and have brought ruin and death upon more than one household, and were plotting the ruin of Rose Carter, and also Sibyl Conrad, after having won the affection of yonder beautiful Indian girl, only in the end to tire of her, after she had given up all for you, and cruelly desert her to her fate," and the Scout turned and pointed toward Red Bud, who at that moment rode up, and in silence gazed upon the two.

"You have then become the champion of all the red-skin and pale-face girls on the border?" sneeringly replied Howard Talbot.

"I have sought you to take your life, as I slew your wicked father, last night."

"What! Ricardo dead?"

"Yes, and you shall soon join him; but I would not shoot you down like a dog, but give you a chance for your life. You have a knife in your belt, and report says Many-Faces has found but few equals in its use. Draw and defend yourself, Howard Talbot."

Instantly a gleam of hatred and triumph, commingled, flashed in the eyes of the hunted man, and, drawing his long, keen knife, he sprung upon the Scout.

But, Deadly-Eye met him with steel, and the blades flashed in the sunlight like a circle of fire.

Both were men of splendid physique, and were noted for their strength, agility and courage, and therefore the duel between them was one of deadly ferocity, the Scout fighting for revenge, his antagonist struggling for his life.

For many long moments in breathless suspense the Red Bud of the Forest, the poor, trusting, loving, but deserted squaw, watched the terrible encounter, and then her eyes gleamed with joy as she saw Deadly-Eye spring within the guard of his enemy, and, once, twice, thrice drive his gleaming blade into his bosom.

With a half-uttered cry Howard Carleton sunk to the ground, a dead man, and coolly wiping his blood-stained blade, his destroyer stood regarding him.

"Well, Red Bud, he will do no more harm."

"No, Many-Faces gone to happy hunting-grounds. Stranger Scout is great brave, big chief. Red Bud want to be his squaw."

Deadly-Eye started and turned an inquiring look upon the beautiful Indian maiden, while shaking his head sadly, he said:

"No, let the Red Bud of the Forest return and sing in her native wigwam, where her people dwell around her; the stranger Scout will ever love her, and think kindly of the Pawnee maiden, but his heart belongs to a daughter of the pale-faces."

The Red Bud of the Forest is heartsick; the great Scout will not have her love, will not let her head his moccasins, work his leggings, cook his dinner, or dwell in his wigwam, and her eyes will grow dim with weeping. Deadly-Eye has spoken, and Red Bud will return to the village of her people."

Sadly the lonely Indian maiden turned away, and ere the Scout could prevent, bounded upon her horse, and the next moment was flying across the prairie.

"Well, it is better thus. Now I must bury this body, for even my enemy I cannot leave for the wolf to tear in pieces, and in his veins flows kindest blood to mine."

Thus saying, with his knife the Scout dug a grave in the soft soil, and after taking from the body the belt of arms, placed it within the narrow resting-place, which was soon filled up with earth.

Mounting his horse, and leading the steed of his late enemy, Deadly-Eye then set off across the prairie, just as the sun was sinking from sight beyond the distant horizon.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RETURN TO RIVERSIDE.

FROM the scene of his prairie duel, Deadly-Eye headed in the direction of the fort. At nightfall he halted for rest, for both steed and rider sadly needed it. After looking to the comfort of the horse, and rolling himself in his blanket, Deadly-Eye was soon lost in slumber.

With the first glimmer of the day he was astir, and after a few hours' ride came in sight of the fort, and was shortly after welcomed by General Canton and Percy La Clyde, who had arrived the night before, bringing with him the prisoners taken and the wounded of both sides.

The rage of Major Belden was great indeed

when he knew of the great triumph of his enemy, and he at once offered his resignation, which the general received with satisfaction, for he was now convinced that the major had been acting an underhand part toward both himself and the Scout.

After his arrival, Deadly-Eye sought Rose Carter, or rather Carleton, as the reader knows her now to be, and found her greatly improved by her rest, and far more cheerful.

Being left alone by the kind-hearted general, Deadly-Eye made known to his half-sister the secret that had so long divided them, and together they sorrowed for those they had lost.

The next day Deadly-Eye and Rose left the fort, accompanied by Percy La Clyde and twenty troopers, who acted as an escort, and the following night they reached the Riverside settlement.

One other was of that party, and that other was Major Belden, who was determined, ere he left the western frontier, to once more seek to win the hand of Sibyl Conrad.

Silently he rode along at the head of the troopers during the journey to the settlement, no one hardly speaking a word to him.

But his hopes regarding gaining the hand of Sibyl rapidly faded away, when, upon his arrival, she never even noticed his existence.

Soon all became known in the settlement, and the romantic career of Deadly-Eye, no longer the Unknown Scout, was upon every tongue, and his beautiful half-sister at once became greatly admired, and in her old cabin-home, which she had last seen under such painful circumstances, and which had been the residence of Howard Carleton, Rose set to work to put things to right, and become her noble brother's housekeeper.

Perfectly convinced, when she saw the meeting between Sibyl and Deadly-Eye, that she had no hope of success, Ruth Whitfield suddenly changed her tactics and bent all of her fascinations upon Major Belden, who was too philosophical a man to make himself miserable about a lost love, and devoted himself in return to the haughty beauty. So successful was his suit, that, within a few days, the two became engaged, and Major Conrad gave his consent that they should be at once married, as Major Belden was anxious to return to his home in Massachusetts, pending action upon his resignation.

The wedding arrangements were quickly made, an itinerant Indian missionary preacher performed the service, and the well-matched couple set off for the nearest town, Percy La Clyde and his troopers acting as a guard of honor most reluctantly.

One month after, and when autumn was painting the leaves many hues, Percy La Clyde returned once more to the settlement, and, with a sigh, learned that Sibyl Conrad was the promised wife of Deadly-Eye, as he was still called among the settlers.

But, the bright eyes and lovely face of Rose Carleton soon soothed the heartache of the gallant young soldier, and without surprise, Deadly-Eye received from Percy La Clyde a proposal for the hand of his beautiful sister.

Need I say the consent was gladly given by the brother, for he greatly admired Captain Percy La Clyde, and believed him one of the noblest soldiers that ever scalped an Indian or hunted down a desperado.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

THE snows of winter fell upon the Western prairies, and covered the humble roofs of the Riverside settlement, which had wonderfully improved, and everywhere around presented an air of homelike comfort and prosperity.

And in the months that had glided by since Major Conrad and his comrades had found new homes on the border, many changes had come, and the onward march of civilization was heard around them, for new friends were daily welcomed in their midst, and improvement was striding bravely forward.

One cold wintry night, when the moonlight gilded the fields of snow, and silvered the icicles upon the eaves of the roofs, a ruddy glare burst through the windows of Major Conrad's cabin, and the light of many candles fell upon a happy and goodly company of

"Fair women and brave men."

It was a scene of joy long to be remembered by the participants, and among the plain but neat costumes of the frontier belles and beaux glittered the uniforms of a number of gallant soldiers—most conspicuous among whom were General Canton and Captain Cassidy.

The cause of this joyous gathering was a dou-

ble wedding, for Alfred Carleton, once the famous Deadly-Eye, was to claim as his bride the beautiful Sibyl Conrad, and Captain La Clyde was happy because that night he was to make Rose Carter his wife.

Soon the chaplain of the fort entered the room, and then followed the grooms and brides, and taking their places before the clergyman, he soon made each couple one.

Since that joyous eve years have passed away, and the settlement is now a flourishing town; but never is it a dry subject among its denizens to discuss the romantic life of Deadly-Eye, the Unknown Scout.

THE END.

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